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Masculine gender roles and therapy: A conceptual workshop

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MASCULINE GENDER ROLES AND THERAPY:
A CONCEPTUAL WORKSHOP

BY

SARA LINDSEY GRAY

B.A., Southern New Hampshire University, May 2007

THESIS

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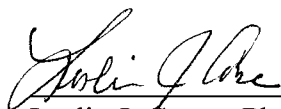
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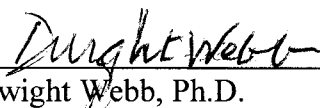
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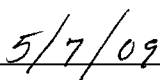
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I would also like to thank David Hebert, Dwight Webb, and Leslie Couse for serving on my thesis committee. They helped to shape and solidify my thoughts and ideas on this subject and guided me through the process of creating this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

MASCULINE GENDER ROLES AND THERAPY:

A CONCEPTUAL WORKSHOP

by

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University of New Hampshire, May, 2009

Traditional gender stereotypes, no matter how inaccurate they may be, still greatly affect how we view ourselves as men and women in our society. While all these stereotypes are constricting male stereotypes present some of the most limiting expectations for individuals. Within the realm of counseling and psychotherapy, these stereotypes conflict with such ideals as self exploration and emotional awareness and expression.

This paper reviews past and recent research and theories on the development and reiteration of male stereotypes as well as how these expectations play a role in therapeutic techniques. A conceptual workshop model is also presented as an introduction into the area of male stereotypes and their impact on traditional therapeutic techniques. Ideas and suggestions for working therapeutically with males are also provided.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Within the United States, we are socialized from the time of birth by our parents, family members, peers, communities, schools and the mass media. One of the biggest life lessons we learn from those around us is that of our predetermined gender roles. These roles come to affect how we identify ourselves and how we interact with others. Roles that are labeled as “masculine” or “manly” often prohibit men from expressing themselves emotionally so one may wonder how these stereotypical male ideals influence men’s behaviors within the therapy session where the opposite behavior is expected. While counselors-in-training learn about a wide variety of multicultural issues, a greater amount of time needs to be dedicated to addressing issues of gender. More specifically, how masculine gender roles affect men’s ability to connect within the therapy session.

Background and Rationale

Due to culturally defined stereotypes there are different expectations for males and females when it comes to the awareness and expression of emotions and feelings. In order to better examine these differences, it is necessary to look at where men and women learn these unconscious ways of thinking and behaving.

Parents’ attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors influence how their children develop. One of the most crucial roles that parents play for their children is as gender role models. Our society reinforces these gender roles through various mediums, whether it’s the media or a mother telling her young son “boys don’t cry” after scrapping his knee. Boys

are shown from early on in their lives that deviation from these restrictive definitions results in painful rejection, shame and misunderstanding. Parents provide their children with invaluable information about the wrongs and rights of the world but they can also unknowingly lead their sons into the emotionally isolating world of masculinity.

The dynamics between same-sex parent-child relationships are unique in that they provide them with the culturally accepted roles of gender. These same-sex relationships guide gender-defined behaviors and beliefs throughout the lifespan. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory applies ideas such as these to parent-child relationships. A primary concept of the theory is that human learn through observing the behaviors of others. Sons imitate and model their father's masculine behaviors and learn through rewards and punishment which behaviors are acceptable and the same is true of mothers and daughters. Social learning theory has taken significant steps towards gaining a better understanding within the context of societal influences. The observations a child makes from his or her parents' relationship may influence the types of relationships and level of intimacy a child feels comfortable expressing. Research within is this area can be somewhat limiting in that it does not explore single parent homes that lack same gender parental figures. It may be the assumptions that there is some role model available whether it is a grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, or family friend that may provide examples of what it means to be a certain gender.

Pioneers in the topic of gender role stereotyping, such as William Pollack (1998), have introduced the idea that traditional gender roles limit the emotional and psychological development of men. Pollack's idea of a "gender straightjacket" provides a metaphor for the concept that men feel constrained within their gender roles (p. 6).

Pollack and Levant (1995) have described seven features of ideology that men should and are expected to learn. These features include “avoid feminine behavior, hide displays of emotion, behave aggressively, rely on only yourself, achieve the symbols of power and status over relationships, be objective regarding sexual behavior, and fear and dislike homosexuals (p. 5).” The struggle to define one’ self becomes increasingly difficult when the rules are so well defined. Situations that require men to break their carefully created selves, such as therapy, threatened to chip away at the only definition of masculinity that men know.

Definition of Terms

Within this research the following terms will be used. To insure that there is no confusion when referring to these terms the following definitions have been provided:

Gender: Social definitions of what it is to be masculine or feminine.

Gender role conflict: “A psychological state which occurs when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles have a negative consequence or a negative impact on a person or others who come into contact with the individual” (O’Neil, 1990).

Gender stereotype: Beliefs and standards that are held to be true about certain sex roles. Certain characteristics are assigned to different sexes based on culturally defined expectations.

Socialization/socialized: The societal values which encourage certain behaviors and discourages certain other behaviors through various mediums such as family, school, community, and mass media. For example, a little boy is often encouraged to play with “tough” toys, as a toy truck, and discouraged from playing with toys such as a doll which are traditionally for little girls.

Traditional gender roles: Within Western culture (specifically the United States in this

research) traditional gender roles refers to culturally constructed definitions of what it means to be a heterosexual male or female. For example, men are the “bread-winners” of the family and that is considered a primary goal. An example of a traditional female gender role is the belief that women should be the primary caregiver and nurturer for their children.

Proposed Model

This proposal was designed to provide a model for a one day workshop for counselors-in-training, seasoned counselors and professionals from various settings within the field of mental health. The workshop aims to encourage emerging counselors and professionals to challenge traditional male stereotypes through various group activities, small group discussions, and presentations. It is the hope that through the exploration of unconscious biases and gender expectations that participants of the workshop will increase their awareness of male stereotypes and how these affect the outcome and success of counseling relationships with the males they work with.

Summary

Traditional male stereotypes and associated behaviors conflict with men’s abilities to effectively communicate their emotions during the course of therapy. Unconscious learned behaviors continue to promote men’s emotional isolation and traditional models of therapy often lack the insight into these restrictions. With an in-depth look into restrictive male gender stereotypes, the goal of this proposal is to increase counselor awareness of such stereotypes and promote greater education for counselors and counselors-in-training as to how to conduct successful treatment with male clients.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

When filling out any informational sheet, whether it's at the doctor's office or for a graduate student's research gathering, we are asked to check off the boxes that best describes us. These boxes can be as simple as checking off male or female. We rarely stop to think what each box means in our daily lives. From the time of our birth we are placed in categories based on our gender, race, ethnicity, etc. These descriptors greatly influence how we define ourselves and how others define us. There are many descriptive words that come to mind when someone says the words male, man or men: physically strong, financial provider, independent, control, emotionally strong, hard working, competitive, and aggressive.

Gender roles, also referred to as gender stereotypes, are socially defined concepts of what it is to be masculine or feminine. These roles differ from biologically defined sex roles in that gender roles are learned, internalized, and experienced socially accepted behaviors that begin in early childhood and continue to affect individuals through late adulthood (Mahalik et al, p. 247, 1998). These roles become ingrained within our unconscious selves to the point that we are often unaware of their immense influence on our psychological development. In many cases, we fail to recognize how our daily choices are influenced by our gender. However, it is evident through countless activities and choices made throughout the day, whether it's the color mug someone picks for their morning coffee or a wife assuming her husband will drive them to their location, gender

roles define our lives. Being a certain gender may affect the opportunities we are given, the clothes we wear, the movies we watch, the books we read, the choices we make, how we interact with others, how we view ourselves, and even our self worth.

Parent-Child Relationships

In the book, *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*, authors Kindlon and Thompson address the early life experiences of males that promote the separation of men from their true selves. The authors suggest that in early childhood, as children begin attending school and exploring friendships, boys long for connection to their parents at the same time as they feel that they must pull away (1999, p. 3). This is referred throughout gender role literature as the struggle between the desire for connection and the drive to achieve autonomy. Kindlon and Thompson believe this conflict is most pertinent to young boys as they begin to evaluate their relationship with their mothers in relation to their gender role expectations. As boys grow and mature they become aware that the emotional and physical affection of their mother-son relationship violates what they are learning about what it means to be a man. William Pollack (1998) describes this as the “trauma separation” between mother and son and states that this premature separation has lifelong emotional ramifications for males (p. 11).

Bandura (1977) and his theory of social learning help to explore how our relationships impact our education of what it means to be a male or female aside from biological factors. One of Bandura’s central ideas, modeling, refers to as individuals’, in this case children’s, observations of others’ (i.e., parents) behaviors and then replicating the behaviors in order to achieve acceptance. These behaviors continue to be either rewarded or punished by parents as the child grows and the roles are then evaluated by

the culture and society as the person matures through life. Bandura believed that this process of modeling helps children's behaviors and attitudes to become socially appropriate, helping the child to become a successful adult within their given environment. While both parents are influential on gender role development, the dynamics between same-sex parent and child are unique in that they provide children with the culturally accepted roles of gender (Fagot, Leinbach, & O'Boyle, 1992).

Much interest has been raised in the area of father-son relationships and how they affect the development of gender specific behaviors. Osheron (1986) researched this interesting dynamic and found that between the ages of three and five boys begin to solidify their roles as male. While he believes this time is essential for boys' development, he argues that traditional male gender roles prohibit fathers' physical and emotional availability to their children. This can be a difficult time for emerging young boys because their primary figure is often their mother and they are being taught to disengage with her at the very time he needs connection. This can also perpetuate the male provider stereotype because they see the role acted out by their fathers. This can lead boys to become confused and unsure of their sense of self. Kindlon and Thompson refer to this crucial experience as the emotional "miseducation" of boys (1999, p. 3). This stereotyping continues the cycle of gender roles for fathers as well as many fathers struggle with the expectations of society and their individual desires for their children. Fathers often want to be tender with their children but have difficulty expressing it.

During the early years of life, children's abilities to reason things out are limited, leading children to believe just about everything they are told without question. Thornburg (1979) suggests that both parents model masculine behaviors for young boys

in that mothers are just as strict with encouraging masculine behaviors as fathers. Gender roles are socialized ideals that create expectations for both genders. Mothers learn from interacting with their fathers, brother, friends or other males in their lives what it is to be male and the consequences of acting outside gender line. This affects their parenting and what they teach their sons about being male. Mothers continue to encourage their sons to avoid expressing emotions or behaviors that are associated with being feminine in order to protect them from ridicule and rejection. Later in adolescence, these traditional gender roles are challenged with peers but they often remain within the context of what their parents displayed.

DeFranc and Mahalik (2002) investigated the relationship between gender role socialization and parent-child attachment. Based on past research of gender socialization and modeling, the researchers noted the significance of parent-child relationships. The data that the authors collected indicate that there is a correlational relationship between masculine gender role strain and parental attachment and psychological separation. The sons' gender role stress was positively related to psychological separation from both parents. The piece of information that appeared to play the largest role in the findings is the son's perception of his father's gender role strain. Sons who estimated their fathers as meeting more rigid gender stereotypes rated themselves as having a more distant relationship with their parents, whereas those sons who estimated their fathers as meeting less rigid masculine stereotypes reported stronger attachment.

Fischer and Good (1998) examined the relationship between parent-child relationships and masculine gender role conflict for college-aged men. They hypothesized that men's degree of masculine role conflicts would be related to men's

reports of relationships with their parents. More specifically, they predicted that men with greater masculine role conflict and stress (more "traditional" men) would report less positive relationships with their parents. Three variate pairs categorized the results for this study. The first variate pair indicated that the sons' perceptions of less conflict with both their parents were associated with less masculine role stress. The second variate pair shows that men who reported both parents as a source of psychological support, less conflict with their mothers, both their parents as supportive, loving, and promoting independence tended to report greater conflict and stress about success and performance but less conflict about expressing emotions. The final variate pair revealed that men who rated their fathers as being a source of security reported lesser levels of masculine role conflict regarding the expression of emotions. These findings support the idea that relationships with parents correlate with men's masculine role stresses.

Gender Role Socialization

Our parents provide us with the first and perhaps most significant lessons in gender role expectations but the environment that surrounds us helps to shape our attitudes and beliefs about our world. Our education in gender roles continues once we leave the home and interact with others. O'Neil (1986) has identified what he refers to as gender role socialization. He suggests that gender socialization affects how people view males and females and that beginning in childhood we learn rigid gender roles that limit our abilities to grow as individuals. Pollack (1998) refers to this as boys losing their true selves. O'Neil explained that gender stereotypes create internal conflict when one has difficulty remaining within the confines of their given gender roles requires individuals to renounce parts of their identity. This creates society to create sexist ideas

which cause males and females to devalue the opposite sex in order to validate their identities (i.e., “you throw like a girl”). O’Neil argues that both male and female are responsible for the rigid gender roles present in society and that most people will experience some degree of gender role conflict throughout their life. With gender role conflict playing such a large role in our identity development counselors need to be aware of the impact that they have on their clients’ symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses.

Mahalik, Cournoyer, DeFranc, Cherry, and Napolitano (1998) explain the internal conflict that arises from restrictive gender roles in terms of social constructs. Their research states that individual societies define what it means to be male or female within their given context and provide guidelines in order to create boundaries for what is to be acceptable behaviors for each gender. Specifically in the United States, stereotypically male gender roles stress behaviors that require male to be emotionally distant and independent from others, whereas stereotypical female gender roles include awareness and expression of emotions and multiple close interpersonal relationships. Theorists throughout the years have attended to explain the influential nature of parent-child relationships. Corey and Corey (2006) have identified what they label as “traditional male traits” which include emotionally unavailability, independence, power, aggressiveness, denial of fears, protection of their inner self, invulnerability, lack of bodily self-awareness, remoteness with other men, a drive to succeed, denial of “feminine” qualities, avoidance of physical contact, rigid perceptions, devotion to work, loss of male spirit, and experience of depression.

William Pollack, a pioneer in the area of masculine gender roles, coined the term “Boy Code” to explain the myths, assumptions, models, rules, and inaccurate stereotypes of what it means to be a male in American society (1998, p. 5). Through his extensive research with young boys and men, Pollack has found that males hold strongly to the restrictions of masculinity even when they can be damaging to their sense of self. Pollack goes on to say that this “Boy Code” is so ingrained within our society that it creates a “gender straitjacket” which restricts males from being their true selves. This straitjacket limits the amount of true self that a male can show to others before their behaviors are considered “unmanly.” It requires males to create a façade; Pollack refers to this concept as the “mask of masculinity” which is created in order to hide what is happening to them internally.

Brannon's Model of Traditional Masculinity (1985) is popular throughout the male gender literature. Brannon lists four critical stereotypes that are at the center of male gender role development. The “sturdy oak” stereotype stresses the importance of males’ independence and ability to appear emotionally strong so that others cannot any see moments of weakness. This creates barriers for progression within the therapy session because men are often unaware of the presence of such boundaries. The “give ‘em hell” stereotype describes males’ tendency to appear macho and high-energy in all situations in order to prove their masculinity. This type of attitude plays a significant role in male-male relationships. The “big wheel” stereotype is males’ need to achieve power and status within their lives in order to appear successful and therefore worthy of respect. This stereotype often requires wearing a mask of “coolness” and not showing emotions where a failure has occurred. The final stereotype, “no sissy stuff” is seen as the most

damaging, in that it limits boys' expression of emotions. While the fear of femininity exists in all the stereotype listed here, the "no sissy stuff" carries the overt avoidance of behaviors considered feminine in nature. These stereotypes make it difficult for males to experience empathy and sympathy openly with others.

Pollack and Levant (2006) have described seven features of ideology that men should and are expected to learn from our society. These features include "avoid feminine behavior, hide displays of emotion, behave aggressively, rely on only yourself, achieve the symbols of power and status over relationships, be objective regarding sexual behavior, and fear and dislike homosexuals (p. 5)." O'Neil (1981) hypothesized that masculine gender roles are fueled mainly by a fear and avoidance of femininity. This is the concern of not only fear being seen as unmanly, but more specifically the fear of being viewed as feminine. Men are unknowingly devaluing women by discounting any behavior that is considered feminine but it is an unconscious concern that is instilled in them over time. O'Neil theorized that men's fear of femininity can result in six patterns of gender role conflict identified as restrictive emotionality: difficulty expressing and understanding one's emotions; socialized control: men are socialized to actualize controlling behaviors over others; power issues: need to obtain authority, influence, or ascendancy over others; competition issues: need to gain something or the comparison of self to others; homophobia: any belief system that holds negative stereotypes about homosexual people.; restrictive sexual: limiting one's sexuality to approach male gender roles; affectionate behavior: limiting one's affection towards others; obsession with achievement and success: a preoccupation with work, accomplishments, and eminence as a means of sustaining their masculinity; and health care problems: rigid masculine values

can result in poor physical health. It is not to say that females do not have similar concerns about power, control or accomplishments but much of men's success in the world is defined by their ability to uphold such stereotypes.

Through simply observation it is easy to see that males do not communicate with one another the same way that female do. Generally, the topics of discussion focus on non-personal issues such as cars, sports, or work issues. Pollack (1998) believes that boys and male express their emotions and love for others through actions rather than words because it allows them to stay within their gender roles. For example, with father-son relationships, males are more likely to play football or wrestle around with one another then sit down and discuss their feelings about significant life events. This is important to consider when creating a therapeutic environment with males.

Pollack's (1998) research with boys and men revealed that the "boy code" provides boys with masculine guidelines for having male friendships. Forming friendships with other men allows boys and men to learn how to have intimacy without sentimentality, closeness without long conversations, and empathy without expressing it through words. Male friendships allow men to have social networks without crossing masculine boundaries. Hart (2006) agreed that men do not only form intimate relationship with women but also with their male friends. These relationships are different in that they do not have romantic or sexual aspects but they can certainly be intimate. Hart identifies three male social patterns for forming intimate relationships. These include member of the pack, best friend, and half of a couple. Member of the pack refers to a group of male friends. This environment allows men and women to meet and socialize with little intimacy, little commitment, and a small amount of power. The best

friend pattern offers a more intimate relationship to be formed between two people. There is an understanding about the relationship, which allows both members to express feelings and talk about difficulties. There is more commitment and intimacy within these relationships, and both members work to keep the relationship going. However, men still have difficulty expressing emotions to other men even within this close relationship and often do things such as favors instead of describing their emotions. The half a couple pattern refers to an intimate relationship between a male and a female. This relationship is typically committed and takes up a large majority of the couple's social lives. Once boys move from friendship to romantic intimacy with girls, they have difficulty communicating. Boys and girls have different expectations for each other, which can cause conflict. This pattern continues into boys' mature lives and relationships.

Osherson (1992) identified many issues affecting intimate male relationships through his work with father and son relationships. He refers to attachment battles as men's lifelong struggle with intimacy and expressing emotions to those they love. This struggle applies to men's relationships with women, children, parents, coworkers, and other men. Men have difficulty connecting to others, especially other men. Osherson also identified the "Male Paradox," a phenomenon in which men are geared towards achieving success and competency within their career but are often left feeling disappointed with their relationships. Men have difficulty finding a balance within their strict boundaries. Their social environment tells them to strive for career goals, while their basic psychological needs create a longing for connection with others.

Hart (2006) argues that men must make the choice between power and intimacy and they tend to sacrifice intimacy because their socialization teaches them that power is

more important. Men feel they need to protect themselves from all forms of vulnerabilities, and this includes forming emotionally intimate relationships. Quite frankly, it can be like speaking a foreign language due to men's "emotional illiteracy" (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999, p. 5). Forming this type of relationship opens men up to be criticized, and most men would rather avoid criticism all together. Accordingly, many men withdraw from emotionally intimate relationships. Hart identifies in his work three common life themes found in men's experience; seeking power over intimacy, seeking power at work and intimacy at home (which results in a complete separating of the two worlds), and denying their need for power (which results in a feeling that they did not live up to their role as a "real man").

This once again perpetuates the provider role for male in that they do and provide things for others rather than say how they are feeling. Pollack stresses the point that "fathers are not male mothers" (pp. 113, 1998). Fathers and sons have unique relationships, which differ from the mother-son relationship, but are equally important.

Gender Role Conflict

Accompanying these ideals of what it is to be a male or female in our society come the struggle to adhere to these standards. O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, and Wrightsman's (1986) refer to this internal struggle as "gender role conflict" and define the concept as "a psychological state in which gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others. It occurs when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self" (pp. 166-167). According to O'Neil et al. gender role conflict exist on the four overlapping areas of our cognitions, affective experiences, behaviors and unconscious experiences. Our cognitions provide us

with restrictive thinking about gender as well as gender stereotypes, whereas our affective experiences are our emotional reactions to gender roles. These affect how we view ourselves and others in terms of acceptable gender defined behaviors. The way we think and feel about our gender roles influences our behaviors (actions, reactions, and interactions with others), and unconscious experiences (internal conflicts about given gender roles) (1995, p.6). Empirical research conducted in the areas of gender role conflict have revealed several patterns including men's tendency to focus on personal achievement and obtaining authority over others (Success, Power, and Competition), avoidance of verbal expression of their emotions (Restricted Emotionality), evasion to the expression of emotions and feelings with other men (Restricted Affectionate Behavior Between Men), and difficulties balancing the many responsibilities of work, school, and family relationships (Conflict Between Work and Family Relationships) (O'Neil et al, 1995).

Emotional Illiteracy

Men's difficulty with emotions due to their socialization often leaves men in the dark about experiencing and expressing their emotional selves to others in their lives. In tune with gender role conflict, Osherson (1992) suggests that men struggle with shame as a result of their inability to express emotions. He has identified three ways that the subject of intimacy creates issues for men; failing at "manly" tasks, powerful emotions that would be considered "unmanly," and yearnings for connectedness that conflict with male stereotypes. Osheron clarifies the difference between guilt and shame, in that guilt is considered a manly emotion because it includes struggle, whereas shame is thought of an unmanly emotion because it admits a failure. Shame within the area of intimacy is

particularly difficult for men to address so they tend to focus their emotions into other more acceptable emotions, like anger. Another way for men to be more comfortable in addressing their shame is through silence. Others, especially women and children, often misunderstand these forms of emotional communication.

Fischer and Good (1997) compared men's restrictive emotionality to alexithymic, which is a clinical syndrome characterized by difficulty expressing emotions. The findings indicated that alexithymia and fear of intimacy were strongly correlated to more traditional masculine gender roles. Fear of intimacy with a romantic partner was associated with both masculine gender role stress and gender role conflict. Levant (1995) agrees with such findings and believes that a mild form of alexithymia is widespread among adult men. He points out that men were not encouraged to learn to express their emotions, and they were outright told not to. Men's socialization leads them to think of intimacy issues and emotions through a systematic and logical deduction. He argues that men simply learn to become unaware of their emotional self. This makes it difficult for men to be aware of other's emotions as well. Levant stressed that there are emotions which men find acceptable to express openly including anger. Males are able to turn emotions such as sadness or depression in anger at themselves and others. This limits men's ability to cope with their adult lives.

Bergman (1995) believes that past theories on male psychological development fail to address men's "self-in-relation" to others. That is to say, past theories fail to address how men form relationships in relation to others. He suggests that men have as much of a drive for connectedness as women which relates to theories that suggest males are born with a need for closeness but are socialized to disregard such needs. Much like

Kindlon & Thompson and Pollack, Bergman suggests that males and females share this drive until the time where mothers and fathers direct the male child towards stereotypical male gender roles. Reading within the area of gender role conflict indicates that men's unmet unconscious needs for intimacy can lead to feelings of shame, embarrassment or depression.

Help Seeking

Although men tend to experience some level of gender role conflict and its associated psychological consequences, men still hesitate when seeking help to reveal some of their pain. Throughout childhood these unrecognized emotions continue to create inner conflict and continues into the adolescent years when this conflict is typically overlooked as a natural part of being a "moody teenager." As the years progress and the conflict increases men becomes more isolated from their true selves without any awareness of how they idealized masculine selves play into it. Addis and Mahalik (2003) note that men see seeking help for emotional problems is seen as a poor personal reflection but also as a poor representation of a man. In this light, men view their inability to manage the stresses of the world as a failure to live up to their expectations as men. Due to feelings of inadequacy, men often seek female therapist because they are viewed as more nurturing and match traditional ideas of therapy but they also stray away from male therapist because of the embarrassment of seeking help from another man. It makes them feel ashamed that they must seek help from someone else and feel that another male will not be as understanding of their emotional difficulties as a female. This may be influenced by males' socialization to seek emotional refuge with females because women are socialized to be caretakers (Scher, Stevens, Good, Eichenfield, p. 31, 1987)

Recent estimates are that at least six million men in the United States suffer from a depressive disorder every year (NIMH, 2005) and suicide rates are 4 to 12 times higher for males than for females (DHHS, 1994). Part of the issue is that men who do make the giant step to attend therapy are often misdiagnosed. Men are said to experience depression differently than women because they are more likely to acknowledge physical symptoms such as fatigue, irritability, loss of interest in work or hobbies, and sleep disturbances and less likely to be aware of emotional disturbances (NIMH, 2005). This adds an additional obstacle to men receiving treatment for their psychological and emotional difficulties.

Seeking help from anyone goes against the deepest rooted male stereotypes as well as violates their socialized need for power and control as well as violating emotional boundaries. Hart (2006) writes that male stereotypes present men as the “all-knowing, all-competent, emotionally-controlled and logical computer” (p. 8) but the rates of male depression and suicide indicate that their façade may be just that, a façade. When entering therapy or any form of help seeking, men often find themselves speaking a different language. With feelings of embarrassment or shame at obtaining help from others weighing heavily in their minds and on their attitudes, adding the additional stress of not being the ideal emotionally attuned client can greater damage a male’s self esteem. It can also lead to frustration and feelings of failure that can cause their depressive symptoms or isolation to increase. Therefore careful consideration of gender role stereotypes is essential when conducting therapy with males.

Typically, it takes a great deal of motivation and persuasion for a male to enter therapy or seek help from outside sources. Men rarely attend therapy for themselves but

due to the pressure of the three P's; provider, protector, procreator, men surrender to the demands placed on them by mothers, girlfriends, or wives (Horne, 2004, p. 457). In fact, Brooks (2001) reports that "traditional men hate psychotherapy and will do almost anything to avoid a therapist's office" (p.84). For many men, they have never questioned their gender roles or expectations as a man and are unaware that they are unconsciously suppressing emotions.

With traditional male stereotypes in mind; difficulty expressing and recognizing emotions, strained intimate relationships, misidentification with their true selves, it is easy to see why men tend not to seek psychological help. It goes against their masculine grain. Much like the Feminist Movement strives for enlightenment through awareness of societal influences, counseling with males should include the education and awareness of how male gender stereotypes affect the daily decisions and lives of men. If counselors were more in touch with this tremendous influence on males, it would greatly improve their effectiveness in treatment with men. It is essential to meet the males we work with on their level. Traditionally men are not aware of their gender roles as it pertains to their psychological well being and increasing this knowledge may allow them to gain greater insight into their true selves. Much is lost in men's childhoods due to the molding of our gendered selves. Reconnection to the parts of themselves that are not bound by stereotypical beliefs and ideals can create lifelong benefits.

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL WORKSHOP MODEL

With the effects of socialized gender roles and expectations of masculinity weighing heavily on the men of our society, new approaches to psychotherapy with men needs to be reviewed. The following proposal presents a conceptual model for a one day workshop designed to increase the awareness of counselors-in-training or even seasoned professionals of the restrictive affects of gender role expectations on their male clients. This workshop is designed to address counselors conducting therapy with adult males in an outpatient setting. However, counselors or therapists from other areas are encouraged to attend as there will be information pertaining to working with males in a variety of fashions including group counseling. Flyers for the workshop will be placed at a variety of settings, including schools, agencies, hospitals, and any other environments where education about counseling males is beneficial.

This conceptual model includes two psychoeducational PowerPoint presentations on the field of masculine gender roles including theories and research and suggestions for working with males. There will also be three gender typed activities which have been adapted from other sources in order to promote the increased awareness of how gender role influence individuals' life choices and the choices of those around them. This model is merely a concept and is in no way meant for immediate use and the included materials are samples and not finished products.

This one day workshop is designed for forty people and is intended to run from 9am to 4pm. There will be eight tables with five individuals at each. It is the hope that creating smaller groups for group discussions will increase the willingness to share among others.

Meeting Ground: Increasing Counselor Awareness of Male Gender Roles

9AM – Welcome and Introduction (10-15 minutes)

Small introductions to the topic. Individuals attending the workshop will be asked to fill out a simple questionnaire about which capacity they work in with males. They will also be asked several questions about traditional male stereotypes and areas they would like to explore. A sample questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

Part I: Identifying Traditional Stereotypes

First Activity: Children’s Books and Movies (10 minutes)

“Children’s books give us examples of what it means to be male or female. It provides us with information about desired physical attributes, abilities, gender-typed interests and preferred occupations” (Gooden & Gooden, 2001, p.90).

The participants will be asked to identify their favorite book from their childhood. The presenter of the workshop will read aloud the questions provided in Appendix B. Participants will be asked to take a few minutes to write down what it is that they liked about the book and what they remember about it. They will be asked to write down any significant memories about the book (i.e. remembering their father reading it to them or their mother).

Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Following the completion of the questions being asked by the presenter the various participants will be asked to hold a small group discussion with the other individuals at their table. The participants will be asked to discuss their responses to the questions asked by the presenter. The groups will be asked to note any reoccurring themes. The small groups will then be asked the following question by the presenter: If you were going to write a book for your child, grandchild, student, niece or nephew what important messages would you like to convey about masculine gender roles? The groups will be asked to brainstorm a response and present it to the larger group. The presenter will write down each groups' response on a large poster board in front of the groups. Important themes and responses will be identified by the presenter in order to gain a general census of the attitudes and ideals of the various groups.

Second Activity: Biased Job Titles (10 minutes)

This activity will help participants to explore gender stereotyping in the world of work. Participants will be given an activity sheet (located in Appendix C) to be filled out. The sheet asks participants to label jobs as either typically held by males or females. Then they will be asked to explain why they believe that job to be held primarily by males or females and what characteristics influence their decisions.

Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

The participants will be asked to discuss the results of the activity amongst their group/table members. They will be asked to explain their answers, noting any similarities or differences. Helpful questions to have the groups consider at this time would be which jobs are the highest paying? Most respected? Require specific training that is typically

attributed to gender stereotypes (i.e. engineers are generally men and men are stereotyped as being good at math). Another interesting topic to raise during this time may be, how would you feel if your son decided he wanted to be a secretary or childcare worker? Or if your daughter wanted to be an electrician or car mechanic? The groups will be asked to note any reoccurring themes as well as their feelings and reactions to topics raised about gender typed jobs. Each group will present their themes and reactions to the larger group.

Presentation I: A Look at Gender Role Theories (1.5 hour)

A PowerPoint presentation will be presented as an introduction to male gender stereotypes and some of the central ideas from the research and theories of James O'Neil (1981, 1986, 1995, 2001), William Pollack (1998, 2001), Glenn Good (1995, 1997, 1998), Gary Brooks (2001), James Mahalik (1998, 2002, 2003) and Fredric Rabinowitz (2001). Topics include Gender Role Socialization and Gender Role Conflict. The PowerPoint presentation is provided in Appendix D.

Break for Lunch (45 minutes)

Part II: Moving Into the Future with More Awareness

Third Activity: Mask of Masculinity (30 minutes)

William Pollack (1998) uses the term “mask of masculinity” to describe how men create a façade or mask to hide their true selves from the world. This mask allows them to remain within their male gender stereotypes but creates a world of isolation and often times depression. With Pollack’s idea in mind the participants will be asked to create their own Mask of Masculinity. Participants will be provided materials including pencils, markers and crayons. Participants will be given a sheet (provided in Appendix E) which depicts a Mask of Masculinity. The left side of the mask is meant to represent the parts of

the individual that depict Male Stereotypes and the right side is meant to represent the Real Self that men often hide from others. The females in the group will be asked to identify a significant male in their lives, whether it be their husband, boyfriend, father, brother, friend, etc, and create a mask of what they believe to be that individual's use of masculine stereotypes. Males will be asked to create one for themselves.

Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Group members will be directed to present their masks to others in their group and explain their mask and females will discuss the person they modeled their mask after. Group members will be asked to take note of similarities and differences between the various masks.

Presentation II: New Psychotherapy Approaches to Masculine Gender Roles (1.25 hours)

With some increased awareness about male gender stereotypes and their existence in our own thoughts and behaviors, it has reached the point in the workshop to explore new ways of looking at how these gender roles affect men's ability to examine their emotional worlds in the realm of counseling. Participants will be encouraged to share with the group their experiences in counseling or therapy settings with males and techniques or theories they found beneficial. A sample presentation is available in Appendix F.

Large Group Discussion and Question Period (1 hour)

The last hour of the workshop will be reserved for a large group discussion about the group activities and information gained about male stereotypes. This time is also reserved for any questions participants may have about male stereotypes or new therapeutic techniques to working with males.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATION OF CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Within the society at large, there is a general lacking in the awareness of restricting gender stereotypes. Men are expected to act in a certain manner and these boundaries are well defined and well preserved. It is an enormous task to attempt to increase awareness on a societal level but its inclusion within therapy is essential. This conceptual workshop model is an important tool for the introduction of traditional male stereotypes to those who work in a field that is characterized by increased awareness of self and self in relation to others. This model was created in order to increase awareness of the existence of gender stereotypes to counselors, counselors-in-training and various other male oriented settings because it is crucial in success of their outcomes.

Limitations of Model

While this model provides a sample for a one day workshop, it is in no way an in-depth examination into male stereotypes. While this model provides an adequate introduction there are several areas that the model fails to address.

There are many elements to the presentation of male stereotypes that would apply to males in general but does not take into account various other factors including age, race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, single parent or unique family environments. The research gathered and presented focuses primarily on adult, White, middle-class, American males and therefore lacks in the area of multicultural

implications. There are many aspects to male stereotypes that apply across cultures but each culture or society presents unique expectations that affect the development of males.

This model was designed primarily to address adult outpatient male clients. It may not transfer well to other areas unless modifications have been made. Consequently this model was created to look at mental disorders that typically affect adult outpatient clients. Even more specifically it looks at depression which is commonly associated with the struggle to adhere to masculine stereotypes. An important distinction has been made to note the difference in symptoms and reactions to mental illness in males. This subject involves greater detail and an additional area of research and data collection than is within the scope of this thesis but is essential to the understanding of male emotionality.

With this in mind, there is a vast amount of research on masculine stereotypes and their effects on every aspect of men's lives. The research presented within this work only exposes a minimal amount of the valuable information available. More time needs to be dedicated to exploring techniques and theories specific to addressing the psychological issues of men as they relate to their masculine identities. A great body of research exists in the examination of past and present therapeutic techniques that include the influence of male gender role stereotypes.

Implications for Therapy

Much like the ideas of Feminist theories, this research hopes to bring to light the societal influences that affect humans on an individual level. People often fail to see how their societal expectations, in this case gender roles, play into their personal feelings about their self worth and the development of psychological disorders. The underlying

influence of gender roles on personal development. The awareness and exploration of male gender stereotypes can greatly help men to see how their roles as men affect how they view themselves and others.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Meeting Ground:
Increasing Counselor Awareness of Male Gender Roles

Please take a few moments to fill out these questions in reference to your work with males. Please check all that apply.

I work with males in a:

- Mental Health Agency
- Private Practice
- School Environment
- Hospital Setting
- Community Setting
- Non-profit Organization
- Other: _____

The age range of the males I work with is:

- Children: 5-13
- Adolescence: 14-19
- Young Adults: 20-35
- Middle Adulthood: 36-55
- Late Adulthood: 56-65
- Elders: 66-_____

The primary male figure(s) in my life was/is/are my:

- Father
- Grandfather
- Brother
- Uncle
- Teacher
- Coach
- Friend
- Other: _____

APPENDIX A (continued)

I am a:

- Counselor-in-training
- Licensed:
 - Mental Health Counselor
 - Therapist
 - Social Worker
 - Other licensed professional: _____
- School Counselor
- Community Member
- Sports Coach
- Other: _____

I am here today to:

- Learn About Male Gender Stereotypes
- Learn Techniques For Counseling my Male Clients
- Learn About The Males In My Life
- Confront My Own Gender Stereotypes

APPENDIX B

Children's Books and Movies *Questions to be read by workshop presenter*

Take a few minutes to think about one of your favorite books from your childhood. Here are several questions to consider while thinking about the book.

What book was it?

What did you like about the book?

What memories come up when you think of this book?

Was this a book that you read with a parent? If so, with which parent?

Who is the main character in this book and is this individual male or female?

What were some lessons you learned from this book about how to be a girl or boy?

Take a few more minutes to think about your favorite movie as a child. Consider similar questions about the main character(s).

What did you learn about your gender roles from this movie?

APPENDIX C

Gender Job Titles
Adapted from "Non-traditional Careers"
College of DuPage
425 Fawell Blvd.
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137-6599

Below is a list of common jobs held in our society. Place a F by jobs generally held by females and a M by jobs generally held by men. If you feel there are equal numbers of females and males hold a certain job, place a B (for both) on the line.

_____	Construction worker	_____	Pilot
_____	Architect	_____	Plumber
_____	Computer Programmer	_____	School Principal
_____	Research Scientist	_____	Firefighter
_____	Dentist	_____	Social Worker
_____	Interior Decorator	_____	Accountant
_____	Daycare Worker	_____	Therapist
_____	Lawyer	_____	Truck Driver
_____	Carpenter	_____	Nail Technician
_____	Food Service Worker	_____	House Painter
_____	Librarian	_____	Electrician
_____	Bus Driver	_____	Flight Attendant
_____	Guidance Counselor	_____	Telephone Installer
_____	Engineer	_____	Nurse
_____	Secretary	_____	Mechanic
_____	Doctor	_____	Police Officer
_____	School Teacher		

MALE DOMINATED JOBS

Select three of the jobs you felt were dominated by males and give some reasons why you believe to be true.

1.

2.

3.

FEMALE DOMINATED JOBS

Select three of the jobs you felt were dominated by females and give some reasons why you believe to be true.

1.

2.

3.

**IDENTIFYING
STEREOTYPES:
INCREASING
AWARENESS OF MALE
GENDER ROLES**

CONSIDER

A small word with a big meaning

Gender influences every decision we make

▣ The clothes we wear

▣ The books we read

▣ Our daily interactions

▣ How we view ourselves

▣ How we view others

▣ Even the color of this presentation was affected by gender roles. Purple is for girls right?

Sex vs. Gender

□ Sex roles: are biologically defined roles of what it is to be male or female

□ Gender roles: are learned, internalized, and socially accepted definitions of what it is to be masculine or feminine

What does it mean to be a male?

- ▣ "Boys don't cry"
- ▣ "Don't be a sissy"
- ▣ "Homo, Fag, Queer"
- ▣ "Don't be such a girl about it"
- ▣ "You throw (or run) like a girl"
- ▣ "Be a man about it"
- ▣ Can you think of any others?

Men are...

- ☐ Physically Strong
- ☐ Financial Providers
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ In control
- ☐ Emotionally and Mentally Strong
- ☐ Hard workers
- ☐ Competitive
- ☐ Aggressive

Men are...

☐ Emotionally Isolated

☐ Depressed

☐ Anxious

☐ Insecure

☐ Overwhelmed

☐ Ashamed

☐ Lonely

Traditional Male Traits

(Corey & Corey, 2006)

- Emotionally unavailable
- Independence
- Power
- Aggressiveness
- Denial of fears
- Protection of their inner self
- Invulnerability
- Lack of bodily self-awareness
- Remoteness with other men
- Drive to succeed
- Denial of "feminine" qualities
- Avoidance of physical contact
- Rigid perceptions
- Devotion to work
- Loss of male spirit
- Experience of depression

The 3 Ps

(Horne, 2004)

□ Provider

□ Protector

□ Procreator

Socialization

We learn how to think and behave from those around us

Parents, siblings, peers, coaches, teachers, the media...all play a part in our shaping of our gender identities

Parents

■ Osheron (1986) found that between the ages of three and five boys begin to solidify their roles as male

■ Thornburg (1979) suggests that both parents model masculine behaviors for young boys.

- Mothers are just as strict with encouraging masculine behaviors as fathers.

“Boy Code”

(Pollack, 1998)

- myths, assumptions, models, rules, and inaccurate stereotypes of what it means to be a male in American society
- Creates a “gender straitjacket”
- Men begin to create a “mask of masculinity”

Brannon's Model of Traditional Masculinity (1985)

• Tough Male Stereotypes

• Sturdy Oak

• "Gimme 'em Hell

• Big Wheel

• No Sissy Stuff

Ideology of Men

(Pollack & Levant, 2006)

- Avoid feminine behavior
- Hide displays of emotion
- Behave aggressively
- Rely on only yourself
- Achieve the symbols of power and status over relationships
- Be objective regarding sexual behavior
- Fear and dislike homosexuals

Fear of Femininity

(O'Neil, 1981)

- ▣ Restrictive emotionality
- ▣ Socialized control
- ▣ Power issues
- ▣ Competition
- ▣ Homophobia
- ▣ Restrictive sexual
- ▣ Affectionate behavior
- ▣ Obsession with achievement and success
- ▣ Health care problems

Gender Role Socialization

(O'Neil, 1986)

Gender socialization affects how people view men and women and children that learn rigid gender roles become limited in their abilities to grow as an individual and handle the difficulties of being an adult

- Gender stereotypes create gender role conflict
- Gender role conflict and sexist ideas cause men and women to devalue
- the opposite sex in order to validate their identities

the socialization of men and women explains how sexism exists within our society

Both men and women are responsible for the rigid gender roles present in society and need to take responsibility for it

Most people will experience some degree of gender role conflict

Gender role conflict can be better understood through further research

Counselors need to be prepared to deal with the affects of gender role conflict

Gender Role Conflict

(O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, and Wrightsman, 1986)

Occurs as a result of struggling to adhere to traditional gender stereotypes

The struggle between the real self and the need to fulfill stereotypes

Defined as "a psychological state in which gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others. It occurs when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation or others or self"

Gender Role Conflict

(O'Neil et al 1986)

Gender role conflict exists on four overlapping areas:

- Cognitions
 - restrictive thinking about gender
- Affective Experiences
 - emotional reactions to gender roles
- Behaviors
 - acceptable gender defined behaviors, actions, reactions, and interactions with others
- Unconscious Experiences
 - internal conflicts about given gender roles

Patterns of GRC

(O'Neil et al, 1995)

Competition

Men are socialized to focus on personal achievement and obtaining authority over other

Restricted Emotionality

- men's socialization to avoid verbal expression of their emotions to others
- Restricted Affectionate Behavior Between Men
- Socialized boundaries around open expression of emotions and feelings with other men
- Conflict Between Work and Family Relationships
- men's difficulties balancing the many responsibilities

Being A Man

□ How do you understand what it is like for a man in your society better than another man?

□ How do male gender roles play into men's relationships with other men?

Male Friendships

(Pollack, 1998)

Traditional Boy Code

- boys and men to learn how to have relationships:
 - without sentimentality
 - closeness without long conversations
 - empathy without expressing it through words

Male Social Patterns

(Hart, 2006)

■ Member of the Pack

allows men and women to meet and socialize with little intimacy, little commitment, and a small amount of power

■ One of a Kind Friend

offers a more intimate relationship to be formed between two people. Allows both members to express feelings and talk about difficulties. More commitment still difficult expressing emotions to other men

■ Half of a Couple

Refers to a committed romantic relationship. Still some difficulty expressing emotions and confiding in others

Male Paradox

(Osherson, 1992)

Men are geared towards achieving success and competency within their career

This often creates feelings of disappointed with their relationships

- Men have difficulty finding a balance
- Their social environment tells them to strive for career goals, while their basic psychological needs create a longing for connection with others

Power and Intimacy

(Hart, 2006)

Men are forced to make the choice between power and intimacy

They tend to sacrifice intimacy because their socialization teaches them that power is more important

- Three life themes:
 - Power over intimacy
 - Power at work and intimacy at home
 - Denying their need for power

Consequences of GRC Shame and Guilt

■ Osherson (1992) suggests that men struggle with shame as a result of their inability to express emotions

■ Always that the subject of *intimacy* creates issues for men: “manly” tasks

- powerful emotions that would be considered “unmanly,”
- yearnings for connectedness that conflict with male stereotypes

So how do we address such issues?

In the second part of the presentation we will review new techniques and approaches to counseling and helping men within the boundaries of their masculine gender roles.

MEETING GROUND

Therapeutic Techniques
& Approaches for Working with Males

Male Gender Roles

- Stereotypes make it difficult for men to ask for help or admit they can't do it alone
 - Independence
 - "I can do it by myself"
 - Emotionally Strong
 - "I'm fine"
 - In control
 - "I have everything under control"

GRC

- ▣ Can create feelings of
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Shame
 - Anger
- ▣ Men are often unaware of how their gender expectations play into their moods, feelings, thought and behaviors

Liu, Mohr & Rochlen, 2005

Investigated the relationship between real and ideal gender-role conflict with psychological distress

Good et al, 1995

Research conducted with undergraduate college students supported the notion that men's restrictive emotionality (difficulty experiencing and expressing emotions) is strongly associated with men's discomfort in close interpersonal relationships and psychological distress (p. 8)

Depression

Researcher estimate that at least six million Americans suffer from a depressive disorder every year

Men and women experience depression differently

- Men may be more willing to acknowledge fatigue, irritability, loss of interest in work or hobbies, and sleep disturbances
- Less likely to be aware of emotional disturbances

Dealing with Depression

- ▣ Substance Abuse
 - Can mask depressive symptoms
- ▣ Compulsive about work
 - ▣ reckless behavior – impulsivity
 - ▣ taking risks

Obstacles to Treatment (Levant, 1990)

- 1) The “sturdy oak”
 - Men must conceal their weakness...even from themselves
- 2) Difficulty asking for help
 - Admitting they can't do it alone
- 3) Difficulty identifying and processing emotions
 - Not impossible, emotions are selective - anger
- 4) Fear of Intimacy
 - Out of fear of homosexuality

Ego-central (Nadler, 1990)

Such problems are those that are perceived to reflect an important quality about oneself

Men are found to be less likely to seek help if they feel the problem is viewed as a central piece to their identity

For example, a man who conforms to masculine stereotypes of emotional isolation may feel that ask for help with his depressive symptoms is threatening to his self worth

Concerns

(Adajis & Mahalik, 2003)

■ Reciprocation

- Therapy doesn't give men the opportunity to reciprocate to those who help them

■ Others' Reactions

- How others will view their need for help

■ Loss of Control

- Giving control to a professional

Treatment Options

(Addis & Mahalik, 2003)

Two options:

- Change individual men to fit the current design of psychological services
 - Emotionally driven, self-awareness, increased emotional insight
- Change the services to fit the “average” man
 - Meeting men where they are at

Important Things to Consider

- When relating to men
 - Men show affection through physical actions
 - Doing chores or tasks for those they love
 - Boys wrestling with their fathers
 - Males prefer to speak about their emotions indirectly
 - Through sports or cars
 - It is easier to relate emotional or psychological problems to physical causes
 - Emotional or psychological pain can be found in the body (i.e. sore back, tense neck, headaches)

Men's Group

- ▣ All male group counseling provides an unique opportunity for men to interact
- ▣ Allow men to speak about their experiences in a context that is supported by other men
- ▣ Takes away some of the pressure and shame of seeing an individual therapist

Areas to Explore

(Corey & Corey, 2006)

Gender roles affect

relationships with spouse and mother

relationships with significant others

Friendships

Relationships with children

Relationships at work