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**A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY OF CONCEPTUALIZED HETEROSEXUALITY  
AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE COUNSELING PROCESS**

by

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B.A., Virginia State University, 2003  
M.Ed., Virginia State University, 2006

Submitted to the Graduate Faculties of  
Old Dominion University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

COUNSELOR EDUCATION

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY  
May 2009

Approved by/

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY OF CONCEPTUALIZED HETEROSEXUALITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE COUNSELING PROCESS**

Breyan N. Haizlip  
Old Dominion University  
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Danica G. Hays

With CACREP's increasing attention to majority cultural group memberships and its influence on trainee self-awareness and the counseling relationship (see CACREP 2001/2009), heterosexually-identified counselors have little or no opportunity to increase awareness of their own sexuality, creating challenges when working with clients of various sexual identities. The purpose of this article is to present a qualitative analysis of conceptualized heterosexuality and its influences on the counseling process. A model of the process by which heterosexually-identified counselors conceptualize their heterosexual identity and its influences the counseling process is proposed. Results suggest that providing counselor trainees an opportunity to explore the relationship between conceptualized heterosexuality and the counseling process have the potential of increasing counselor effectiveness with clients of dominant and non-dominant sexual orientation status. The authors further present strategies for addressing conceptualized heterosexual identity in counselor preparation. Implications for future research are also discussed. A review of the relevant professional literature is presented.

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Timothy Grothaus  
Dr. Tammi Milliken

This dissertation is dedicated to the proposition that while the  
root of education is bitter...the fruit is so sweet.



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The words of Marvin Sapp's gospel song "Never Would Have Made It," best capture my journey. I have overcome insurmountable opposition and challenge in the journey and all I can say is, "I'm stronger, I'm wiser...when I look back at all you brought me through, I can see, that you were the one I held on to!" So first and foremost, I thank God, who is truly the head of my life. I pray that this and all the works of my life are acceptable in His divine in perfect sight. Thank you Lord!

To my husband, who should rightfully share this honor with me, my king, and my very best friend, who has done more than can be captured in words, I love you and thank you. They don't make men who support their wives the way you have. Through everything, the only thing that I can depend on is God and you- the only things in my life constant and unconditional. Thank you for being a replication of God's love in my life. You are my strength and my heart. Without you, I would have quit. So thank you for helping me to walk into my greatness and I look forward to our "happily ever after!"

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## Chapter One

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Identity is conceptualized as an internalized and self-selected regulatory system that represents an organized and integrated psychic structure that requires the developmental distinction between the inner self and the outer social world (Adams, 1992). Identity is comprised of a coherent and clear sense of one's self, which includes one's own values, beliefs, roles and culture (Anett, 2000; Schwartz, 2001). This may include intrapersonal knowledge of gender, race, ethnicity, social class, spirituality and sexuality. Gilbert and Scher (1999) define sexuality as a term that is inclusive of intimacy, eroticism, sexual activities, one's communication of sexuality (e.g., sexual behaviors and self-expression), how one's needs are contented by behavior, and the characteristics of an individual one finds sexually attractive. Arguably, a component of sexuality is sexual identity. Parson (1985) defines sexual identity as referring to one's self-definition of being a sexual being and the degree to which one adheres to or rejects sexual expectations associated with social or cultural norms. He also describes sexual identity as the patterned, individualized, and subjective experience of desire and sexual arousal, as well as the behaviors and fantasies that stimulate them. Masters, Johnson, and Kolodny (1994) expand upon Parson's (1985) definition and suggest that sexual identity also includes coping with inevitable issues of socially dictated gender role expectations and developing comfort with and certainty of one's sexual orientation to ultimately cultivate a personal sex value system. Thus, sexual identity development is the process by which an individual, regardless of sexual orientation, embarks upon conceptualizing one's sexuality, sexual identity, and sex value system (Worthington, Savoy, Dillon, &

Vernaglia, 2002). Until recently, traditional definitions of sexual identity development in counseling and multicultural literature have described the process of “coming out” as gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) identity development. These terms are oftentimes used synonymously in literature. Worthington et al. (2002) were pioneers in defining sexual identity development for heterosexual persons. Worthington et al. (2002) define heterosexual identity development as, “the individual and social processes by which heterosexually identified persons acknowledge and define their sexual needs, values, sexual orientation and preferences for sexual activities, modes of sexual expression, and characteristics of sexual partners” (p. 510).

It has been documented that healthy, undisrupted, and normative developmental processes can assist individuals in establishing a commitment to an integrated identity (Anett, 2000; Schwartz, 2001). The formation of a healthy identity is of particular interest to multicultural researchers as much of cultural identity development research is focused on minority group members. This comes to no surprise as minorities engage in developmental processes that are oftentimes disrupted by prejudice, oppression, and a devalued identity reinforced by society (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Developing a healthy, integrated, and self-authorized identity is challenging and difficult for some minorities. In order to do so, minorities are tasked with not only rejecting and ignoring the negative perceptions associated with their identity during this transformative process, but also developing strategies to manage inherent differences while appropriately functioning in mainstream society despite contention. This challenge may include finding ways to diplomatically respond to overt and covert forms of oppression, discrimination, and prejudice (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). While this perspective may



offer a rationale for multicultural researchers emphasis on and, at times, overemphasis on minorities (e.g., GLB, African Americans, Latinos, Asians), researchers' attention to minority group developmental processes may have unintentionally expanded the divide between dominant and non-dominant group members in many respects (Hoffman, 2004). Thus, it is imperative that researchers increase attention to the developmental processes of dominant groups.

An insufficient amount of research has investigated the ways that heterosexually-identified persons perceive or conceptualize their sexual identity development (SID). In fact, the vast majority of literature pertaining to SID, including counseling related research, has solely investigated GLB persons identity developmental processes or heterosexual attitudes towards GLB persons and/or clients (Eliason, 1995; Worthington et al., 2002). These studies often assume a heterocentric view that heterosexuals are a fixed and constant group of persons with predictable attitudes about non-dominant sexual identities and have developed a steady or clear sense of their own identity (Eliason, 1995). Heterosexuals are rarely asked to conceptualize their own identity development similar to other dominant cultural groups (e.g., white, male, Christian). To date, much of the research in counseling and related professions fail to address the questions of how heterosexuals attain a sexual identity or ask whether heterosexuals even experience themselves as having a sexual identity. Since heterosexuality is measured to be the normative or default sexual identity (Eliason, 1995), some may question why it is necessary to study. Moreover, why is it vital to study the heterosexual identity development of counselors and how can such work result in a positive contribution to the literature?

Changing demographics and the need for professionals to be multiculturally competent or understand the perspectives and beliefs of others as a means of increasing counselor effectiveness has led many to reflect upon the degree to which counselors understand their own cultural identities, including their sexual identity. Sue, Arrendondo, and McDavis (1992) describe the culturally skilled counselor as one who values and focuses on self-awareness. Counselor self-awareness is, indeed, the primary building block upon which multicultural competency is built (Brinson, 1996). Cultural self-awareness is the most basic dimension of the multicultural counseling competencies (MCC), at which a counselor must first gain proficiency prior to aspiring to any other dimensions of MCC such as multicultural knowledge and skills (Arrendondo et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1992). Awareness of one's biases or lack thereof can conceivably influence the manner in which a therapist engages empathically with culturally diverse clients.

Nonetheless, counselor self-awareness tends to be overshadowed in multicultural counseling literature and training by focusing on learning about culturally different clients (Roysircar et al., 2005). These studies usually focus on cultural minority groups. Brinson (1996) asserts that multicultural counselor education and literature rarely addresses the cultural self-awareness of the counselor. This is particularly true for counselors who are members of traditionally dominant cultural groups (e.g. Europeans, Christians, males, heterosexuals).

Although understanding the cultural identification and worldview of the client is germane to the counseling process (Sue, 1981; Sue et al., 1992), the need to learn about oneself before learning about others is also paramount. Sue et al. (1992) argues that actively becoming aware of one's own worldview and culture is a necessary precondition

for emerging from one's ethnocentrism or cultural encapsulation as culturally competent counseling tends to be impeded by the deleterious effects of ethnocentrism and cultural encapsulation. Thus, counselors have the responsibility of being aware of how his or her worldview affects behaviors during counseling. The values and attitudes inherent in the counselor's worldview affect the counseling relationship in terms of counselor's behaviors, therapeutic goals, and treatment planning (Sue et al., 1992).

Thus far, attention has been dedicated to how counselors perceive clients of diverse backgrounds and far less attention has been given by mainstream counseling literature to the level of awareness that a therapist has about the way his or her values, biases, and assumptions affect his or her conceptualization of the client and the manner in which he or she engages clients owing to these biases (Roysircar, Arrendondo, Fuentres, Ponteroldo, & Toporek, 2005). This is particularly interesting considering that MC literature offers this breadth regarding race and ethnic studies.

Increased self-awareness in gaining cultural competence in counselors and counselor training is a challenging task given the limited amount of research focused on majority culture identity development as many counselors are assumed to be dominant group members (e.g., White, heterosexual). Cultural identities and identity development are significant constructs to consider in the movement toward MCC. Culturally alert and competent counselors should consider these factors as they relate to clients' identity and also their own identity as self-awareness of one's cultural identity development is undeniably reflected in the counseling relationship and process. For example, when an individual presents problems in counseling, the role of the counselor may be perceived as one whom offers one or more interventions or employs theoretically based techniques to

potentially alleviate symptoms, mediate maladaptive behaviors or thinking patterns, and promote psychological wellness and empowerment. As an agent of change, the counselor's work ideally begins with understanding the nature of the presenting problems and the context in which the problems are manifested- in many cases this context is cultural. Understanding the nature of clients' presenting problems goes beyond the counselor's knowledge of psychopathology, mental health, wellness, helping skills and counseling techniques. It also speaks to his or her efforts to connect interpersonally with the individual seeking services by way of establishing a relationship that is warm, empathic, and collaborative. Establishing a positive therapeutic and collaborative relationship is important because it fosters positive treatment outcome for the client (Wampold, 2001). Many factors contribute to creating a positive therapeutic relationship between the counselor and the client.

In multicultural counseling and psychotherapy literature, creating a positive therapeutic and collaborative relationship with clients relies heavily on the manner in which a therapist presents himself or herself as culturally sensitive and as being comfortable with clients' diversity, as well as how comfortable a counselor is with cultural dimensions of themselves (Roysircar, Pimpinellas, Spanakis, & Vincent, 2006).

The suggestion is not that any one cultural identity alone is the main and salient characteristic in developing cultural competence in counseling practice. Values associated with numerous cultural variables including gender, religious affiliation, ethnicity, age, socio-economic status (SES), sexual orientation, and lifestyle, to name a few, are also enormously relevant in establishing a culturally transcendent counseling relationship. It is also the intersection of these variables that impact the counseling

relationship and therapy outcomes. However, the purpose of this study is to investigate and explore the mainstream values of heterosexually-identified counselors and examine the relationship between how counselors conceptualize their sexual identity development and how that conceptualization influences the counseling process. An exploration of these values may propose a unique understanding of identity development as a dominant cultural group and how these factors ultimately and inevitably influence the counseling process.

### PURPOSE OF PROPOSED STUDY

The purpose of the proposed study is to explore how self-identified heterosexual counselors and counselor trainees conceptualize their sexual identity development and how that development influences the counseling process. The major constructs of this study will include: *self-identified heterosexuality*, defined as individuals identifying to a heterosexual orientation; *professional counselors*, as defined as individuals with a Master's Degree in Counseling or Psychology currently with three or more months of post graduate counseling experience in either community, school, or college counseling; *counselor trainees* as defined as current students enrolled in a Masters Degree program in Counseling; *heterosexual identity development* conceptualized as an internal, self-constructed, and dynamic organization of drives, experiences, and processes that assist and contribute to heterosexual persons establishing a dominant sexual identity (Eliason, 1995), and the *counseling process*, defined as the change process designed to provide symptom relief, personality change, and prevention of future symptomatic episodes and to increase the quality of life, including the promotion of adaptive functioning in work and relationships, the ability to make healthy and satisfying life choices, and other goals

arrive at in the collaboration between client/patient and/or psychotherapist (ACA Governing Council, 1997).

The goals of the proposed study are to (a) contribute to the paucity of literature on dominant cultural group identity development, (b) examine the influences of counselor's self-awareness of heterosexual identity development on the counseling process, (c) propose components of heterosexual identity development and (d) offer strategies for incorporating HID reflection and awareness into counselor education and training.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two research questions will frame and support the purpose of this study:

1. How do dominant sexual identity group members (heterosexual counselors) conceptualize their sexual identity development?
2. How does counselors' sexual identity development influence the counseling process?

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

Counseling process is defined as the change process designed to provide symptom relief, personality change, and prevention of future symptomatic episodes and to increase the quality of life, including the promotion of adaptive functioning in work and relationships, the ability to make healthy and satisfying life choices, and other goals arrive at in the collaboration between client/patient and/or psychotherapist (ACA Governing Council, 1997).

Counselor trainees are defined as current students enrolled in a Masters Degree program in Counseling.

Heterosexuality is defined as describing a predominant sexual attraction or sexual disposition towards individuals of opposite sex.

Heterosexual identity development is defined as the individual and social processes by which heterosexually identified persons acknowledge and define their sexual needs, values, sexual orientation and preferences for sexual activities, modes of sexual expression, and characteristics of sexual partners, which includes an internal, self-constructed, and dynamic organization of drives, experiences, and processes that assist and contribute to heterosexual persons establishing a dominant sexual identity (Eliason, 1995; Worthington et al., 2002).

Identity is defined as comprising a coherent and clear sense of one's self, which includes one's own values, beliefs, roles, and culture which may include interpersonal knowledge of gender, race, ethnicity, social class, spirituality and sexuality and is conceptualized as an internalized and self-selected regulatory system that represents an organized and integrated psychic structure that requires the developmental distinction between the inner self and the outer social world (Adams, 1992; Anett, 2000; Schwartz, 2001).

Professional counselors is defined as individuals with a Master's Degree in Counseling currently with three or more months of post graduate counseling experience in either community, school, or college counseling.

Self-identified heterosexuality is defined as participants identifying their own sexuality as heterosexual.

Sexual identity refers to one's self-definition of being a sexual being, which includes a sociosexual role assumed by the individual to indicate that she or he is either following or rejecting sexual expectations associated with this role within a societal or cultural

context, and the patterned, individualized, and subjective experience of desire, sexual arousal, and discharge as well as the behaviors and fantasies that stimulate them, which suggests that sexual identity includes coping with inevitable issues of socially dictated gender role expectations, developing comfort with and certainty of one's sexual orientation, ultimately developing a personal sex value system (Masters et al., 1994; Parson, 1985).

Sexuality as a term that is inclusive of intimacy, eroticism, sexual activities, one's communication of sexuality (e.g., sexual behaviors and self-expression), how one's needs are contented by behavior, and the characteristics of an individual one finds sexually attractive (Gilbert & Scher, 1999).



## Chapter Two

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Professional counseling and multicultural literature suggests that sexual identity development is a phenomenon traditionally investigated by measures which explore minority sexuality and dominant culture attitudes towards or knowledge of minority sexuality. A number of theoretical perspectives and models exist that illustrate the formation of sexual identity among gay and lesbian individuals (see Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Cox & Gallois, 1996; Fassinger & Miller, 1996; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1995; Parks, 1999; Rust, 1993; Sophie, 1985/1986; Sullivan, 1998; Troiden, 1989). However, until recently, less research efforts have concentrated on describing the identity formation of heterosexual and bisexual persons (Hoffman, 2004; Worthington et al., 2002). While existing literature on sexual identity development has increased attention to counseling strategies and techniques specific to enhancing counselor effectiveness with sexual minorities, such research has also contributed to creating an influx of multicultural literature that focuses solely on minorities. Thus, this section will offer a brief overview of traditional models of sexual identity development (including strengths and weaknesses) and present recent bodies of literature proposing the conceptualization of heterosexual identity development. The implications of such research on the counseling process and the counseling profession will also be presented.

#### TRADITIONAL MODELS OF SEXUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Traditional models of sexual identity development (see Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989) describe sexual identity formation as a linear or sequential development process that begins with one's awareness of same-sex attraction and recognition of feelings that

deviate from the “norm”. It is suggested that the individual then progresses through stages of testing or exploration, culminating in personal acceptance and public acknowledgement of a minority sexual orientation (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989). The process of SID for gay and lesbian persons and the “coming-out process” are oftentimes used synonymously in literature. “Coming out”, public acknowledgement, or disclosure of gay and lesbian group membership, is oftentimes considered to be indicative of developmental maturation (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989) in gay and lesbian developmental models.

Some of these earlier models of sexual identity development (SID) made assumptions about gay men and lesbians having nearly identical developmental processes and experiences (Yarhouse, 2001). This was a central weakness of Cass’s (1979) and Troiden’s (1989) model, however; one of the more popular and widely recognized models of SID is Cass’s (1979) six-stage model. Recently, this model has been more accurately considered to be a model describing the “coming-out process” of gay and lesbian persons, rather than a model of SID per se (Worthington et al., 2002). According to Cass (1979), gay and lesbian identity develops as follows: (a) *identity confusion* (questioning of identity in light of same sex attraction), (b) *identity comparison* (acknowledging difference in sexual attraction that deviates from the norm- heterosexist social messages), (c) *identity tolerance* (assuming that same sex attraction may mean that one is probably gay), (d) *identity acceptance* (acknowledging that same sex attraction means that one is gay), (e) *identity pride* (taking pride in minority group membership and forfeiting heterosexual privilege), and (f) *identity synthesis* (realizing that being gay is a part of who one is). Later, Troiden (1989) reported a broader model of committed gay

and lesbian persons, drawing in part on the work of Cass (1979), all of which have relatively similar features (Prince, 1995). According to Troiden (1989), the meanings that are attached to the differences that are perceived by gay persons is the key to understanding gay identity development. This proposition is the central difference between Cass's (1979) model and the work of Troiden (1989). In Troiden's (1989) original work, he interviewed 150 gay men through the use of "snowballing" sampling methods and semi-structured interviews. The results of these interviews led him to organize gay male identity development in the following four stages: (a) *sensitization* (referring to a sense of feeling different from one's peers in childhood and later in adolescence having more crystallized a distinct sense of sexual dissimilarity), (b) *dissociation and signification* (marked by the suspicion that the person may be homosexual in which the individual goes through a period of extricating feelings from identity), (c) *coming out* (which begins with labeling sexual attractions as homosexual and includes self-identification as homosexual, submersion in the homosexual subculture, and redefining homosexuality as a positive and viable lifestyle alternative), and (d) *commitment* (referring to the fusion of gay sexuality and emotionality into a meaningful world which occurs when homosexual identity is adopted as a way of life). In Troiden's (1989) model, after self-identification and identifying as "gay", a man confirms gay identity by engaging in a same-sex relationship.

While Troiden's model offers breadth to the development of minority sexuality, weaknesses of Troiden's model is that it again assumes that the "coming out" process is the culminating event for lesbian and gay individuals. Also, both Cass and Troiden's

models do not discuss the interplay of sociocultural variables that may affect the development of sexual identity.

Later, Coleman (1982), drawing on earlier literature, conceptualized and described a five-stage model of SID that is also considered to be more appropriately labeled as a model describing the “coming out” process. The first stage, *pre-coming out*, is the process of preconscious awareness of same-sex attraction. Coleman (1982) asserts that gay and lesbian persons initially reject, dismiss, or repress these feelings, which ultimately manifest in maladaptive behaviors such as depression and suicide, or, in a healthier context, the acknowledgement of these feelings. The second stage, *coming out*, gay and lesbian persons find solace in telling another person what they are feeling regarding same sex attraction. The third stage, *exploration*, involves exploring feelings of same sex attraction by making contact with persons of the gay and lesbian community. The fourth stage, *first relationships*, is defined by a re-conceptualization of their identity as able, willing, deserving, and free to love and participate in a relationship with the person of their choice. The primary emotional need at this stage is noted to be intimacy (Coleman, 1982). The final stage of this model is integration. Persons at this stage are more capable of maintaining a long-term committed relationship and demonstrate a decrease in possessiveness and jealousy- all of which are characteristics of earlier stages (Coleman, 1982). The strength of this model is that it suggests an active process of SID beyond “coming out” for lesbian and gay individuals. However, central weaknesses of this model are that it is derived from literature and offers no empirical data to support findings and also, similar to Cass (1979) and Troiden (1989), this model offers no context for how biosociocultural factors influence SID.

Among contemporary models of SID, McCarn and Fassinger (1996) offers, arguably the most advanced developmental models, extending development of gay and lesbian persons beyond “coming out” to describe both individual and social processes of SID. McCarn and Fassinger (1996) described this process as including four phases: *awareness* (recognition of minority sexual status and questioning of why one is different), *exploration* (including cognitive and behavioral exploration of same-sex attraction), *deepening and commitment* (which refers to a deeper understanding of sexual identity and commitment to homosexual identity to include “coming out”), and *internalization and synthesis* (referring to integrating a positive sense of self within a gay identity and engaging in meaningful same sex relationships).

A noted strength of these traditional models of gay and lesbian SID (Cass, 1979; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Troiden, 1989) is that they have significantly contributed to the development of literature aimed at enhancing counselor effectiveness with the gay and lesbian population. These models have inspired researchers to reexamine traditional notions of sexuality and develop strategies specific to the subjective experience of the gay and lesbian community. However, these models additionally share similar limitations. One weakness is that these models infer stage theories as linear processes of development and emphasize the significance of coming out as a pivotal and imperative moment in the healthy identity development of gay and lesbian identified persons, but fail to account for recycling or life span development movement between stages. The central weakness of these models is that most of these models, with the exception of Troiden (1989), are developed from examination of literature and offer very little empirical evidence. An additional limitation of the aforementioned models are that biosociocultural

factors that may influence the development of SID are non-existent in these models. These themes are consistent across many of the earliest models of SID.

### SEXUALITY THEORY

As a result of earlier models of SID primarily focusing on minority sexuality, many have assumed general sexuality theory to be the representative for heterosexual individuals. However, early theories of sexuality in human development have, in fact, implied applicability to heterosexual persons. Some of the original pioneers of sexuality theory and research produced literature that reflected heterosexist attitudes and biases by blatantly disregarding minority sexuality in many writings. These attitudes and lack of minority inclusion in literary works, presents an adequate depiction of the heterocentricity of the times (Freud, 1927; Fancher, 1973; Worthington et al., 2002). Sigmund Freud has been noted as the first to attempt to describe issues of “normal” psychosexual developmental processes (Fancher, 1973). Despite immense criticisms of Freud’s overemphasis on the salience of sexuality on identity development, Freud successfully presented an introduction to the interplay of sexual developmental processes and the development of the person. Later, Erickson (1950) suggested components of “healthy geniality”, again excluding discussions of same-sex attraction in his work.

Years later, Marcia (1987) elaborated upon the work of Freud (Fancher, 1973) and Erickson (1950) by conceptualizing identity development along two continua: *exploration and commitment*. Both exploration and commitment include measures of either high or low degrees within each construct. These continua exists within four ego-identity statuses: (a) *diffusion* (the absence of an active sense of identity characterized by low exploration and low commitment); (b) *foreclosure* (the acceptance of an identity

imposed by social norms or the views of others characterized by low exploration and high commitment); (c) *moratorium* (the suspension of commitment during phases of active exploration characterized by high exploration and low commitment); and (d) *achievement* (the commitment to an identity after having explored alternatives characterized by both high levels of exploration and commitment). A noteworthy weakness of this work was that it failed to address the biosociocultural factors that influence the development of identity. This work was not specifically applied to heterosexual identity. A central weakness of Marcia's (1987) work was that it was an assemblage of reviewing existing literature and lacked empirical evidence to support claims. However, Eliason (1995) addressed this limitation drawing on the work of Marcia (1987) by conducting a qualitative analysis and using semi-structured interviews and reflective essays, investigated the SID of 26 heterosexually identified undergraduate students enrolled in a course on human sexuality, applying the work of Marcia (1987) to heterosexual identity development. Eliason used language established from Marcia's (1987) work to establish preliminary codes. Utilizing key proponents described by Marcia (1987), Eliason found significant differences in the developmental processes of men and women and discovered the largest proportion of her participants exhibited *identity foreclosure*, while a large percentage of participants expressed confusion implying a state of *identity diffusion*. With respect to gender difference, Eliason (1995) reported that male participants had a tendency to report a commitment to heterosexuality as a result of a rejection of gay identity, whereas, female participants expressed an openness to other alternatives and active exploration of those alternatives. Furthermore, participants that were characterized as being in a state of moratorium were all female participants. These preliminary

findings serve to provide insight as to the nature of heterosexuality and the complexity and interconnectedness of multiple cultural identities. A noteworthy strength of this research is that its findings were built upon empirical evidence and supported by a sound research project. However, the central weakness of this study was that it offered statutes for heterosexuality and failed to offer a model of how heterosexual identity evolves.

The complexity and involvedness of sexuality and sexual orientation was first documented and captured in research by Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin (1948) and Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, and Gebhard (1953). These authors conducted a 15 year qualitative research project using semi-structured interviews with 5300 male participants across the United States. These pioneers provided an innovative and novel understanding of sexuality that challenged traditional notions of sexuality and undeniably expanded American societies understanding of sexuality and sexual orientation. Kinsey et al. (1948) proposed that sexual orientation exists on a continuum, in which heterosexuality and homosexuality lie on polar ends of this continuum, and bisexuality serves as the midpoint. This work was truly groundbreaking in that it challenged the traditional definitions and notions of sexual orientation. Later, Storm (1980), building upon the work of Kinsey, suggested an alternative two-dimensional scheme to describe four distinct sexual orientation types existing within the context of independent continua for homoeroticism and heteroeroticism: *homosexuals* characterized by high homoeroticism and low heteroeroticism, *bisexuals* characterized by high homoeroticism and high heteroeroticism, *heterosexuals* characterized by low homoeroticism and high heteroeroticism, and *asexuals* characterized by low homoeroticism and low heteroeroticism. Although this model offers groupings, labels, and degrees of sexual



behavior, a weakness of this work is that it fails to appropriately define and isolate sexual attraction as a complex and involved construct of sexual identity.

In 1990, Fritz Klein offered further elaboration of sexual attraction developing the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG) while studying at the Kinsey Institute. Using gender as the central criterion, the KSOG describes seven dimensions of sexual orientation including: *sexual attraction* (with whom an individual is sexually attracted to), *sexual fantasies* (whom an individual has sexual fantasies about), sexual behavior (with whom an individual has engaged in sexual behavior with), *emotional preferences* (with whom an individual prefers to be emotionally intimate with), *social preferences* (with whom an individual prefers to socially interact with), *self-identification* (the sexual orientation that one chooses to identify with), and *lifestyle* (the lifestyle in which an individual engages in). Klein (1990) further described inevitable variance of these factors over time (i.e., past, present, past year, and ideal future). Klein (1990) offered a significant contribution that further refuted traditional understandings of human sexuality. A considerable strength of this work was that it addressed the limitation of oversimplifying sexual attraction. This body of work offers a multifaceted perspective of sexual attraction. However, a weakness of this work is that it is not supported by empirical data and offers no quantifiable categorization of these dimensions.

### HETEROSEXUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Until recently, the literature on heterosexuality and heterosexual identity development (HID) had been fairly nonexistent, in counseling and related literature. Building upon the work of Eliason (1995) and Hardiman and Jackson's racial identity development model (1992), Sullivan (1998) attempted to describe both GLB and

heterosexual identity. In her model, all individuals move through five stages of increasing awareness and complexity regarding their sexual identity. In the first stage, *naïveté*, heterosexual individuals have little awareness of sexual orientation. The next stage, *acceptance*, can be either passive, with individuals more openly expressing and acting on negative opinions of homosexuality. Stage three, *resistance*, can also be passive or active. Passive resistance is characterized by recognitions of heterosexism but also a belief that one can do nothing about it, while individuals in active resistance both acknowledge their own homophobic attitudes and confront those of others. The fourth stage, *redefinition*, involves establishment of a positive heterosexual identity defined by more than rejection of heterosexists beliefs. Individuals who are able to establish an identity independent of normative heterosexist definitions achieve the final stage of development, *internalization*. While Sullivan's model (1998) was the first model to specifically address heterosexuality from a developmental perspective, her model, similar to earlier models of SID, offers no empirical fortitude to substantiate findings.

Nonetheless, Worthington and Mohr (2002), Worthington et al. (2002), and Mohr (2002) have made a tremendous contribution to our conceptualization of heterosexuality and expanded our current body of literature focused on majority group membership by introducing a model of HID that addresses (a) the development of heterosexual identities, (b) individual differences in HID, and (c) the implications of heterosexual identity for training, practice, and research in counseling and related fields.

Worthington et al. (2002) and Mohr (2002) presented two independent theoretical models of HID that integrated the work of traditional and contemporary models of SID (e.g., Cass, 1979; Helms, 1995; Hooker, 1957; Kinsey et al., 1948; Kinsey et al., 1953;

Klein, 1990). Both authors express unequivocal and explicit opposition to conversion or reparative therapy by clearly stating that they are against their work being used for the advancement of such research. For the purpose of this study we will look at the work Worthington et al. (2002) first and then examine the work of Mohr (2002).

Worthington et al., (2002) produced a multidimensional model of HID drawing from literature on majority and minority group membership and contextual influences on identity formation. Integrating perspectives from feminist, multicultural, and GLB literature, this model includes developmental statuses, similar to contemporary models of SID, but also conceptualizes biopsychosocial influences and dimensions of individual and social identity. These aspects of SID are oftentimes disregarded and overlooked in traditional models (Hoffman, 2004). Worthington et al. (2002) initially offered distinct definitions for *sexual orientation* (one's sexuality-related predispositions), *sexual orientation identity* (one's conscious identification with one's sexual predispositions), and *sexual identity* (one's recognition and acceptance of one's sexual orientation). This semantic delineation of terminology is an imperative and key component of investigating and understanding constructs of SID, often overlooked in earlier models of SID. Although, most traditional models of SID claim to investigate sexual identity development, according to Worthington et al.'s, (2002) definitions, earlier models, more accurately seem to investigate sexual orientation identity more than SID. An important feature of this model is that individual sexual identity includes sexual orientation identity (Hoffman, 2004).

The process of individual HID includes six dimensions: (a) identification and awareness of one's sexual needs [one's sexual orientation is included in this category],

(b) adoption of personal sexual values, (c) awareness of preferred sexual activities, (d) awareness of preferred characteristics of sexual partners, (e) awareness of preferred modes of sexual expression, and (f) recognition and identification with sexual orientation (i.e., sexual orientation identity). The six aforementioned dimensions explain key components of heterosexual individual identity development. It is hypothesized that these key components then evolve and interact with the process of heterosexual social identity development, which includes two dimensions: (a) group membership identity and (b) attitudes toward members of sexual minority groups, (Worthington et al., 2002).

Worthington et al., (2002) further posited that HID can be characterized by a parallel convergence of individual and social identity development processes each occurring within a biopsychosocial context (Hoffman, 2004). Worthington et al. (2002) discuss six biopsychosocial influences that affect SID: *biology* (inherent genetic and physiological antecedents and maturation); *microsocial context* (those individuals with whom one has regular contact and receives messages regarding gender role conformity, sexual knowledge, attitudes, sexual values, and some sexual behaviors); *gender norms and socialization* (the assignment of one set of specific characteristics to a specific sex which is reinforced via social influences); *culture* (religious orientation; systemic homonegativity, sexual prejudice; and privilege).

Worthington et al. (2002) theorized that the processes of individual and social identity development for heterosexuals occur within five identity development statuses which may occur on both conscious and unconscious levels throughout all proposed stages. *Unexplored commitment* is characterized by a naïve acceptance and adoption of the compulsory heterosexuality imposed by Western cultural socialization. This status

involves low exploration and oftentimes reflect microsocial (e.g., familial) and macrosocial (e.g., societal) mandates for gender roles and sexual behavior (Worthington et al., 2002). Worthington et al. (2002) hypothesized that many heterosexuals are within this identity status as a result of societal influences which deter active exploration of sexual orientations.

*Active exploration* is the second identity status described in this model, in no particular sequence of linear progression. This status is characterized by “purposeful exploration, evaluation, or experimentation of one’s sexual needs, values, orientation and/or preferences for activities, partner characteristics, or modes of sexual expression” (p. 516). Worthington et al. (2002) suggests that active exploration can happen in a number of ways and is qualitatively different than naïve exploration, which is capricious, haphazard, and requiring very little conscious decision-making. Active exploration is purposeful and goal-directed and may include both cognitive and behavioral modes of exploration, of which, cognitive is often times the preferred and safest mode of exploration for individuals with abstinence-oriented lifestyles (Worthington et al., 2002). However, in order for active exploration to occur, it is suggested that individuals must abandon socially mandated expectations that constitute normative exploration. This hypothesis may account for the high number of heterosexual individuals categorized as having an identity consistent with unexplored commitment. Worthington et al. (2002) posited that there are only two ways for individuals to transition out of this stage, these pathways include: (a) individuals moving into a status of *deepening commitment*, or (b) individual moving into a status of *diffusion*.

*Diffusion* as a heterosexual identity status is defined as the absence of exploration or commitment (Marcia, 1987) and usually results from crisis. This status is often confused with active exploration as experiences reported in this stage are seemingly characteristic of exploration (Worthington et al., 2002). However, the determining factor is whether the exploration contains or lacks intentionality and goal direction. Individuals in this status are intentional in their rejection of social conformity for its own sake, rather than aiming for a deeper understanding of themselves or their sexuality. The concept of what constitutes a crisis that may cause an individual to dwell in diffusion is not explicitly offered in this model.

Closely resembling the identity status Marcia (1987) defined as *achieved*, Worthington et al. (2002) describe *deepening and commitment* as a status in which an individual moves towards a commitment to one's identified sexual needs, values, sexual orientation and/or preferences for activities, partner characteristics, and modes of sexual expression. The distinction between Worthington et al.'s (2002) status and Marcia's (1987) status, is that Worthington et al. (2002) hypothesized that heterosexually identified individuals can move to a status of deepening and commitment in the absence of active exploration. As a result of social constraints that limit heterosexual individuals privilege to actively explore sexuality, maturational development may cause and individual to move to this status (Worthington et al., 2002). Individuals may move out of deepening and commitment by either recycling back into synthesis or diffusion, or into a status of *synthesis*.

Described as the most mature and adaptive status of sexual identity, *synthesis* is characterized by a state of congruence among the dimensions of individual identity,

social identity, and reconciliation of biopsychosocial influences (Worthington et al., 2002). It is hypothesized that this evolved, insightful, conscious, volitional, and enlightened identity undoubtedly positively influences attitudes towards minority group members (e.g., increased cognitive complexity concerning sexual diversity, increased affirmative attitude towards GLB persons, and understanding human sexuality existing on continua) and other heterosexual persons are likely to blend into the synthesis of other identities (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, religion, spiritual orientation, social status). Worthington et al. (2002) contends that the only pathway to synthesis is via deepening and commitment that emerged from active exploration. This is assumed because synthesis is hypothesized to be rarely achieved by most heterosexual individuals.

Worthington et al.'s (2002) model was the first to offer a multidimensional perspective of HID and included biosociocultural factors and influential constructs of HID. However, a significant limitation of this work its implications can only be considered tentative as it has not been empirically tested.

Mohr (2002) independently presented a model of sexual orientation identity that offered an agenda for examining the efficiency of heterosexual-identified therapists' work with GLB clients specifically. Mohr's (2002) model emphasizes his belief that biased practice displayed by heterosexual therapists can be conceptualized as a "manifestation of their efforts to process and respond to sexual issues in ways that foster a positive and coherent identity" (p. 533). As Worthington et al. (2002) discussed the interplay of social and individual identity; Mohr (2002) suggests the interplay of personal identity and public identity as components of heterosexual identity. *Personal identity* is the inner experience and understanding of one's heterosexual orientation, whereas, *public*

*identity* is the manner in which individual outwardly express and demonstrate their experience of heterosexuality in interpersonal arenas (Hoffman, 2004). Mohr (2002) also offered a definition of heterosexual identity which is defined as a “product of the interplay between individuals’ sexual orientation schemas and their motivation to fulfill basic needs for social acceptance and psychological consistency” (Worthington & Mohr, 2002, p. 492). Mohr (2002) described three primary components of heterosexual identity: (a) precursors of adult heterosexual identity, (b) determinants of adult heterosexual identity, and (c) determinants of identity statuses. Mohr (2002) posited that there were two categories of precursors concerning adult heterosexual identity: (a) experiences with personal sexuality (which includes attractions, fantasies, and sex experiences) and (b) exposure to information about sexual orientation through the influence of media, peers, family, school, and church. These precursors contribute to Mohr’s (2002) working models of sexual orientation. Mohr (2002) presented and described four working models of sexual orientation which are: (a) *democratic heterosexuality* (in which people of all sexual orientations are viewed as essentially the same), (b) *compulsory heterosexuality* (in which heterosexuality is the only acceptable sexual orientation); (c) *politicized heterosexuality* (in which homosexual or bisexual individual are seen as oppressed but valiant survivors of a hostile society; and (d) *integrative heterosexuality*, in which all individuals are viewed as participants in an oppressive system, with no one person being “all good or all bad with regard to her or his stance on sexual orientation issues” (p. 545). The aforementioned sexual orientation affect, is affected by the Mohr’s (2002) second determinant of adult heterosexual identity- *core motivations*. Core motivations include



*social acceptance* (the need to belong to a social group or to fit into a group of reference) and *psychological consistency* (the need to have an internal consistent sense of self).

Mohr (2002) posited that working models and core motivation operate “synergistically to give heterosexual individuals a fairly stable sense of themselves in relation to their sexual orientation identities” (Hoffman, 2004, p. 377), while they may fluctuate at times. These fluctuations were presumed to be indicative of changes in heterosexual identity statuses. According to Mohr (2002), a particular identity state is the result of a *sexual orientation stimulus* in conjunction with the *immediate context* in which the stimulus is perceived. This suggests that an individual’s heterosexuality is a reflection of the context of their immediate situation and the influences of origin.

#### HETEROSEXUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE COUNSELING PROCESS

Both Worthington et al. (2002) and Mohr (2002) offer extensive implications for improving multicultural counseling research, training, and practice. These authors successfully shift the focus from one in which the heterosexual counselor must be knowledgeable of GLB development, to a focus in which the development of both parties becomes salient in the counseling process. Whereas Mohr’s (2002) model is specific to counseling in which the counselor is heterosexual and the client is lesbian, gay, or bisexual, Worthington et al.’s (2002) model has implications for the counseling process despite the orientation of either the counselor or the client. Worthington et al.’s (2002) model may also have relevance for counselors working with clients whose sexual orientation is unachieved or unknown. However, the primary weakness of both these bodies of work is that neither author can offer empirical support to claims.

Worthington et al. (2002) hypothesize that the developmental status of the counselors sexual identity development may be related to several desired counselor characteristics, including level of affirmativeness regarding minority issues, recognition of and comfort level with sexually-related issues in counseling, ability to recognize and address issues of erotic transference and countertransference in counseling, avoidance of sexual exploitation of clients, and ability to prevent sexual values from unduly influencing the counseling process, just to name a few (Hoffman, 2004)

Additionally, both Worthington et al. (2002) and Mohr (2002) provide tools by which heterosexual counselors-in-training may examine their own HID, enhancing the competence of counseling trainees who are privileged with respect to sexual orientation. Mohr (2000) also offers counselor supervisors a table of questions which can be used with supervisees to explore their heterosexual identity. Examples of these questions include:

1. How do you experience and explain heterosexual attraction?
2. What are your earliest memories related to heterosexuality?
3. How did you learn about heterosexuality as a child?
4. What messages in the media, classroom, religious institutions, and family-of-origin were you exposed to regarding sexual orientation?
5. How does your view of heterosexuality influence your interactions with clients?
6. In what ways do you see yourself as similar to or different from other heterosexuals?

Mohr's (2002) table of questions are designed to be consistent with components of his proposed model, providing a valuable framework for the exploration of heterosexual processes. It is hypothesized that explorative tools for heterosexual

counselors may be useful in increasing heterosexual self-awareness in this area, consequently contributing to higher degree of achieve MCC.

#### STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF EXISTING ITERATURE

Eliason (1995) and Sullivan (1998) were the first to publish work that offered insight into heterosexual identity development that was not focused largely on biological/developmental (e.g., Masters et al., 1994) or feminist perspectives (e.g., Rich, 1981; Richardson, 1996; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1993). The work of Sullivan (1998) and Eliason (1995) helped to fill a void in the literature regarding the processes by heterosexually identified persons conceptualize their sexual identity, helping to demonstrate the constructedness of sexual identity and conveying the distinctiveness of developmental stages of heterosexuals. Worthington et al.'s (2002) and Mohr's (2002) models further fill the void of literature specifically examining heterosexuality and are reflective of the permeability and fluidity of human development, of which identity is a major construct. In doing so, they have successfully extended our conceptualization of sexual identity far beyond the confinements of sexual orientation (Hoffman, 2004). Furthermore, by looking at the processes of majority groups, these researchers have expanded the limited body of literature concerning majority group members.

The central weakness of traditional and contemporary literature regarding SID is the primary focus on sexual orientation as a sole component of sexual identity. Thus accounting for the tremendous amount of research models aimed at describing the developmental processes of minority sexuality. This weakness tends to perpetuate the dichotomization of sexual identity as either heterosexual or homosexual. Relying solely on sexual dualism tends to overemphasize the tension between minority and majority

group members, which has often been cited as a limitation of existing majority group member models (Helms, 1995; Worthington et al., 2002). As a result of this, earlier models tend to overlook the important aspects of sexual identity beyond sexual orientation thereby blurring individual and social identity processes (Worthington et al., 2002). Traditional models of SID overemphasize individual identity processes to the exclusion of social identity processes. Such implications fail to consider the impact of group membership and privilege (Worthington & Mohr, 2002). Additionally, biopsychosocial influences are often unobserved as contributing factors of SID in traditional models. The absence of this context may offer secondary explanations to observed and reported experiences of heterosexually identified persons.

Another limitation to existing models of SID is the implied linear and unidirectional fashion of reporting sexual developmental processes (Worthington et al., 2002). By doing so, researchers fail to account for the subjective experience of individuals who report recycling or cycling through various dimensions of sexual identity as a result of random life experiences, life span development, and maturation.

Consequently, Worthington et al. (2002) and Mohr (2002) address many of these limitations in their proposed models. This was a result of an extensive review of literature that spanned over sexual identity formation literature into human development, feminist, gender, and multicultural writings. Still, despite efforts to control for many of the aforementioned limitations, both models of HID have been criticized for disregarding the discourse of intersecting identities (Gilbert & Rader, 2002). However, in an ideal world, models of identity development might be constructed in a way that explicitly discusses all possible areas of diversity, including gender, ethnicity/race, sexual

orientation, age, disabilities, religion, social class, and so on. Thus, describing an identity development model that looks at multiple aspects of identity development simultaneously, accounting for the convergence, interplay, intersections, and reconciliation of several identity development processes is considerably complex.

Bieschke (2002) published a reaction to the work of Worthington et al. (2002) and Mohr (2002) and suggested that the proposed models be expanded to include all of sexual identity. However, Hoffman (2004), reacting to Bieschke's (2002) reaction, suggested that converging this model to include both dominant and non-dominant status persons may obfuscate this model's standing as a majority developmental model as majority literature is significantly less prominent and under-represented in multicultural research. It has not been until recently that scholars and researchers alike, have made mention of the importance of examining the functioning, behaviors, experiences, and developmental processes of dominant group members (Worthington & Mohr, 2002), despite the fact that majority group identity models are considerably less prominent in counseling and multicultural literature. An insufficient amount of research has focused on majority identity development (e.g., Helms, 1990, 1995; Rowe, Bennett, & Atkinson, 1994, Worthington & Mohr, 2002). A considerable amount of this literature addresses constructs of race, racial attitudes, and racial consciousness, unintentionally emphasizing socially constructed philosophy of "other" by focusing on processes that presumably deviate from majority group norms. Theoretically, one of the many goals of multicultural research is to examine the nature of oppression, privilege, and prejudice, in an effort to reconcile and understand the differences among members of varying cultural groups. However, the absence of majority identity development focused research (e.g., Whites,

Christians, heterosexuals, males) provides a description of oppression, privilege, and prejudice that is skewed, slanted, one-sided, and inadvertently, biased. Similarly, current understanding of SID is based largely on theory and research focused on gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons (e.g., Cass, 1979; Fassinger & Miller, 1996; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Troiden, 1988). Typically, this literature is derived from perspectives that focus on comparisons with, and deviations from, majority group norms (Worthington & Mohr, 2002). Researchers propose that this lack of breadth concerning majority group membership processes serve to assist the well-being of minority culture identity development and such a focus is a positive reflection of the advancement of multicultural counseling and related fields (Hoffman, 2004). However, the under-representation of dominant culture investigation may inadvertently serve a disservice to minority group advancement, social equality, knowledge, and understanding. Despite evidence of a significant increase and concern for cross-cultural competence over the past 30 years, the under-representation of dominant cultural group exploration unintentionally perpetuates the separation of dominant and non-dominant statuses (Hoffman, 2004), creating a tremendous gap in literature regarding majority group membership and identity development. These limitations are of particular concern to the counseling profession when considering the impact of multicultural competence on the counseling process. Understanding the complexity and multidimensionality of culture on individual identity formation relies on the comprehensive exploration of group membership from multiple perspectives. Although minority group examination may assist in providing considerable insight and understanding of the effects of oppression and prejudice on identity formation, the meticulous and rigorous investigation of the developmental processes of

dominant group members serve to provide a richer understanding of ethnocentricity and privilege- concepts that need to be closely examined if we are to more fully appreciate the impact of multiculturalism and cultural competence on the counseling process.

### THE COUNSELING PROCESS

The counseling process, or psychotherapy, is defined as the change process designed to provide symptom relief, personality change, and prevention of future symptomatic episodes and to increase the quality of life, including the promotion of adaptive functioning in work and relationships, the ability to make healthy and satisfying life choices, and other goals arrive at in the collaboration between client/patient and/or psychotherapist (ACA Governing Council, 1997). The presumed goals of counseling are to offer one or more interventions or employ theoretical application that would potentially alleviate symptoms, mediate maladaptive behaviors or thinking patterns, and promote psychological wellness and empowerment. A multitude of literature has focused on identifying components of this process that ensure positive treatment outcomes and therapeutic effectiveness. Wampold (2001) identified the therapeutic alliance as one of the most important factors in therapeutic effectiveness. The therapeutic alliance is defined as the quality of involvement between therapist and client or patient, as reflected in their task teamwork and personal rapport. The therapists' contribution to the alliance is an important element of that involvement. Wampold (2001) identified therapists' personal and professional attributes that positively influenced therapeutic alliance. These personal attributes included being flexible, honest, respectful, trustworthy, confident, warm, interested, and open. Professional attributes included competence, knowledge, skill, and proficiency in areas of theoretical orientation and cultural competence.

Counselor education curriculum addresses the above noted enviable professional attributes. Counselor trainee's can develop knowledge and skill in the areas of theory and technique, however; gaining cultural competency is far less accessible in mainstream counselor training programs, hence, the development of multicultural competencies and training models.

### MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE

In order to more effectively respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse population and treatment outcome-based research that reports the need for cultural proficiency in counselors, in 2003, the ACA sponsored the publication of a book describing 31 multicultural counseling competencies (MCC) and outlining specific methods for increasing counselor awareness, knowledge, and skills in multicultural counseling situations (Roysircar, Arrendondo, Fuertes, Ponterotto, & Toporek, 2003). The tripartite model of the MCC addresses three domains of education and practice: counselor awareness of her/his own cultural values and biases, counselor awareness of client's worldview, and counselor ability to implement culturally appropriate intervention strategies (Arrendondo, 2003). Counselor awareness of own assumptions, values, and biases were named as a prerequisite prior to acquiring any degree of MCC.

Counselor self-awareness is of particular interest as the benefits of examining majority group membership are further discussed. This domain [counselor self-awareness] includes three components of competency: awareness, knowledge, and skills. An example of a specific competency in this domain is as follows: (1) awareness- counselor understands influence of his/her culture on experiences, (2) knowledge- counselor knows that his/her culture affects his/her definitions of normality, (3) skills-



counselor seeks out educational, consultative, and training experiences to increase awareness, and the counselor is able to recognize limits of competency (Roysircar, 2003).

Counselor awareness of own assumptions, values, and biases can be encouraged through the involvement in several counselor self-awareness tasks: assessment of self-awareness, examination of defensiveness, self-disclosure, and formation of multicultural relationships (Roysircar, 2003). Empirical studies on cultural self awareness indicate that counselors' multicultural counseling competency levels increase when they have training experiences with culturally different clients and they engage in self-reflective activities that help them to process and reflect upon their experiences. Additionally, reflective writing allows trainees to gain awareness about their cultural heritage and what it means to belong to a cultural group (Roysircar, 2003). These findings are a key component to the proposed research design and interview methods.

Roysircar (2003) explains that counselors who understand their biases and theoretical preferences, as well as have an in depth understanding of how their value systems and theoretical orientations are shaped or not shaped by their own cultural group affiliations are able to be more sensitive to culturally different clients. Thus, the expectation of counselors to achieve higher MCC and strive for an understanding of self through cultural lenses must be supported by literature and research that speaks to the various dimensions of culture identity development-for both persons of dominant and non-dominant cultural group membership.

## SUMMARY

Although there have been a variety of models attempting to describe the identity developmental processes of gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons, limited progress has been

made in articulating the developmental processes of heterosexual persons and how that process ultimately influences the counseling relationships with both clients of dominant and non-dominant sexual orientation. While current research on heterosexual identity development is both innovative and promising, it unfortunately lacks empirical fortitude, a significant limitation. However, supported by empirical research, both Worthington et al.'s (2002) and Mohr's (2002) models of heterosexual identity development may result in increased attention to building majority identity development models. Although their hypotheses are yet to be tested, the importance of this work and the outcomes of such research is important enough that counselors need to seriously consider the potential that such work may hold for enhancing counselor effectiveness and potentially serving as a catalyst for positive social change by expanding societies understanding of additional areas of privilege, oppression, prejudice, and sexuality.

Thus, the current study seeks to (a) contribute to the paucity of literature on dominant cultural group identity development, (b) examine the influences of counselor's self-awareness of heterosexual identity development on the counseling process, (c) propose components of heterosexual identity development and (d) offer strategies for incorporating HID reflection and awareness into counselor education and training.

## Chapter Three

### METHODOLOGY

This research designed was approved by the university Internal Review Board (IRB) on June 19, 2008, prior to beginning this research project.

The term *qualitative research* defines a wide array of methodological approaches that share some general characteristics. For example, qualitative methods are part of the postmodern or constructivist tradition and stress the socially constructed nature of reality. That is, human beings are understood to be inherently interpretive and the meaning attributed to experience is not assumed to be consistent across contexts, neither is it taken to be representative of static or immutable human laws. Thus, researchers of the constructivist tradition are interested in how social experience is created and given significance in various cultures and settings (Patton, 2003). Qualitative research is generally conducted through an empathic identification with participants in an effort to view the world as they do and understand the meanings behind their behaviors. The present study investigated the phenomenon of heterosexual identity development's (HID) influence on the counseling process and the meanings behind the development of heterosexually identified counselors. Qualitative researchers also emphasize description over explanation and stress the importance of having concepts emerge directly from the data (Patton, 2003) and apply rigorous data collection and analysis methods. Accordingly, the present study was conducted using a consensual qualitative research (CQR) design (Patton, 2003).

CQR incorporates components of phenomenology and grounded theory models and involves rigorous methods of triangulation, member checking, and data analysis.

Researchers using this method seek to come to a consensus about the meaning derived from the experiences recorded. This method seeks insight rather than breadth and requires in-depth and intimate information about a smaller group of persons (Patton, 2003). For this study, that smaller group of persons included a sample size of 10 self-identified heterosexual counselors.

The essential components of CQR are the use of (a) open-ended questions in semi structured interviews, which allows for the collection of consistent data across individuals as well as a more in-depth examination of individual experiences; (b) several judges throughout the data collection process to foster multiple perspectives; (c) consensus to arrive at interpretations of the data; (d) at least one auditor to check the work of the primary team and judges and minimize researcher bias; and (e) domains, core ideas, and cross analyses in the data analysis (Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, & Ladany, 2005; Patton, 2003). CQR is an appropriate strategy for attending to the voices of the participants with respect to their thoughts, beliefs, values, and experiences of the participant's as it relates to their sexual identity development and its interface with the counseling process since CQR offers a phenomenological and grounded theory element that will support description of the phenomenon and theory development. Furthermore, this methodology (i.e., in-depth interviewing) may facilitate a forum of interpersonal warmth and non-judgmental exploration of an individual basis between a skilled interviewer and informant, increasing the comfort of the participant and providing the close contact necessary to yield more trustworthiness (Hill et al., 2005).

## RESEARCH TEAM

The primary researcher is an African American, female doctoral candidate of the counseling education discipline, attending a southeastern university, in a heterosexual marriage. The primary investigator currently holds a masters degree in Counseling Education and a bachelor's degree in Sociology. The primary researcher has four years of counseling experience and one year post-masters counseling experience in college counseling, community mental health counseling, and school counseling. The lead investigator was responsible for overseeing all aspects of the study, including development of research questions, structuring the research team, selecting the target population, recruiting participants, designing an interview protocol based on literature, collecting data, and functioning as a part of both research teams.

Two primary research teams, or rotating primary research teams (Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, & Ladany, 2005), were utilized for this study. Research team members were not involved with participant interviewing or data transcription. The primary investigator was a member of each research team.

The first research team was comprised of 4 researchers, which included the primary investigator and: 1 White, heterosexual female, counselor education doctoral student; 1 White, gay male, counselor education doctoral student; 1 African American, heterosexual female, counselor education doctoral student: and the primary investigator. The second research team consisted of 1 White, heterosexual female, holding a PhD in Counseling Psychology; 1 White, gay male, counselor education doctoral student; and the primary researcher.

Research team members participated in a 3-hour training specific to the CQR process. This training was facilitated by the primary investigator and developed in collaboration with a doctoral-level researcher/clinician/instructor that is familiar with the CQR method and has utilized this method in studies published in peer-reviewed articles (e.g., *Journal of Counseling Development*, *Journal of Counseling Education* and *Supervision*). All research team members have completed doctoral level courses in qualitative research. As a component of the CQR training series, the research team members were asked to review two transcribed interviews from a sample study and practice grouping data into domains, creating core ideas, and performing cross-analysis between cases.

#### *Assumptions and Biases of Primary Researcher & Research Team Members*

CQR design suggests that researchers report both expectations and biases so that readers can evaluate the findings with this knowledge in mind (Hill et al., 2005). In this study, the primary investigator and author is a middle-class, African American female, in a heterosexual marriage. With regard to biases, the primary investigator believes that sexuality exists on a continuum in that few individuals are exclusively heterosexual or homosexual. Thus, sexual identity development may be a similar process experienced across sexual orientations. It is further assumed that by heterosexuals having the opportunity to explore and conceptualize their own sexual identity development, they may discover apparent discrepancies in their views, beliefs, feelings, and experiences that illuminate the complexity of sexual identity that may deviate from a traditional understanding of heterosexuality. Historically, we see members of various cultural groups assume a specific cultural identity as an outcome of customary cultural variables

(e.g., family of origin, religion of origin, social expectations) and it is assumed that this is also true for self-identified heterosexuals.

To minimize researcher bias, the research teams varied in ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and sexuality-related assumptions. The diversity of the research team ensured for maximum variation and provided a range of perspectives for consensus of the data interpretation process, which is an integral element of the CQR method (Patton, 2003). Accordingly, CQR relies on mutual respect and equal involvement, thus, this diversity in viewpoints among research team members was valued, honored, and protected in the process of consensus. As a result of subtle meanings that may be conveyed through the interview process in CQR, this variety of viewpoints and experiences among the team members assisted in unraveling the complexities and ambiguities of the data retrieved (Patton, 2003).

Prior to beginning the research study, the research team had an in-depth discussion of researcher biases, assumptions, and expectations. The primary investigator facilitated this discussion. The questions included:

1. What are your views concerning how individuals come to identify with a sexual orientation?
2. What are your views concerning heterosexuality and the counseling process?
3. What do you expect/assume that we will find concerning heterosexual identity development?
4. What do you expect/assume that we will find concerning the counseling process?
5. Do you see any flaws or discrepancies in the proposed design?
6. Are there any additional reflections you have about the study?

Research team members expressed a range of biases. All research team members reported beliefs that sexuality existed on a continuum and was a result of biological, social, cultural, and spiritual factors. The largest discrepancy among research team members was regarding whether or not sexual orientation and sexual identity were the same. All research team members, with the exception of the African-American, heterosexual female, believed that sexual orientation and identity were different. Researchers disputed that sexual identity is a matter of “choice” and can be manipulated by factors that include biosociocultural factors, while sexual orientation is a matter of genetics. The researchers further argued that heterosexual identity development may not necessarily be a process because opposition or oppression is not a factor. The research team member identifying as a White gay male argued that while the process for GLB persons may be illuminated because of oppression, establishing a commitment to any identity is a process- although the length and rigor of that process may vary. Research team members were able to resolve this discrepancy by agreeing to highlight the context of each team member’s perspectives on this issue, when relevant in data analysis and interpretation.

Research team members arrived at consensus concerning research design, however, suggested that the interview protocol include a question that explores how participants define heterosexuality.

With regards to research bias concerning the counseling process, the heterosexual team members believed that the data would reveal that heterosexuality may influence the counseling process more when working with clients of sexual minority orientation than those who identify as heterosexual. The gay male researcher suggested that sexuality will



prove to be a salient component of the counseling process regardless of the client's orientation and regardless if the counselor awareness of the salience. This variety of perspectives was perceived to be beneficial to research team members. Research team members resolved this discrepancy by agreeing that because this particular construct has not been explored in research, all research team members were more open to observe emerging data with minimal bias. However, research team members further agreed to illuminate the biases shared between research team members as data were analyzed and coded.

As an additional method of triangulation and to ensure the trustworthiness of the process, this research study employed the evaluation of an auditor who was independent of the study. The auditor for this study was a doctoral level counselor educator at a southeastern university and functioned as the primary investigators dissertation chair. This auditor has significant experience utilizing qualitative research methods. This auditor provided ongoing review and evaluation of the trustworthiness of the procedures, audit trail, and outcomes.

### *Participants*

Participant demographic sheets were collected from 16 individuals in 3 counseling settings including: 2 southeastern universities, 1 southeastern community service board, and 1 southeastern public school. Participants were recruited via purposeful sampling and prolonged engagement. Of the 16 participants, 10 participants were selected for participation based on established participant selection criterion and maximum variation. Maximum variation was established by widely diversifying participant demographics. Required participant criterion included: self-identified

heterosexual counselors and counselor trainees. Data was collected from 2 semi-structured interviews and 1 meaning-making reflective essay from 10 participants (6 females and 4 males). This sample size corresponds to the CQR methods of recruiting between 8 and 12 participants (Hill et al., 2005). Regarding racial background, 6 participants identified as White/Caucasian-American, 3 participants identified as African-American, and 1 participant identified as both White American and African-American. With respect to education levels, 3 participants reported having PhD's or PsyD's in counseling psychology and counselor education, and 7 participants hold Master's Degrees in community counseling, college counseling, and counseling education. The youngest participant was age 22 and the oldest participant's reported age was 36. Only 1 participant reported being a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT). Participants also reported their level of experience with counseling, in which 1 participant reported being a Masters level counseling trainee, 1 participant was a doctoral level counseling trainee, and 8 were practicing counselors. Of the 8 practicing clinicians, 7 participants were currently college counselors and 1 participant was a community agency counselor. The sample further included 6 married participants, 2 participants reporting being in a relationship currently, and 2 participants whom reported being single (Table 1).

Participants were recruited in multiple ways: through interdisciplinary graduate courses, prolonged engagement with counseling facilities, and through referrals from current participants. This sampling strategy facilitated a thick description of the phenomenon under investigation.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

	Age	Race/ Ethnicity	Education Level	Yrs. Counseling	Status
Participant 1	36	Caucasian	PhD	11	Dating
Participant 2	31	Caucasian	PhD	6	Dating
Participant 3	22	Caucasian	Doctoral Trainee	1	Married
Participant 4	28	African-American	Master's Trainee	2	Single
Participant 5	30	Caucasian	MEd	5	Married
Participant 6	32	Caucasian	MEd	5	Married
Participant 7	30	Caucasian	MEd	4	Married
Participant 8	29	African-American	MEd	4	Single
Participant 9	34	African & Caucasian American	MEd	8	Married
Participant 10	29	African-American	MEd	4	Married

## DATA SOURCES

### *Participant Demographic Worksheet*

Each participant completed a demographic form (Appendix A). The demographic questionnaire screened for age, gender, race, ethnicity, academic degrees, professional licensure & certification, counseling experience, work setting, and sexual orientation. Sexual orientation was a self-reported construct.

### *Interview Protocol*

Data were compiled through the use a protocol adopted from Siedman's (1998) 3-interview series protocol (see Appendix B). The most distinguishing feature of this in-

depth phenomenological interviewing process is that it involves a series of 3 interviews with each participant, however; for the purpose of this study, the informants participated in the first 2 interviews of this protocol and completed a written narrative version of the third interview. By using this adopted protocol participants were able to begin to reflect on their heterosexual identity in a gradual contextual manner, by recalling memories and assigning meaning to these memories related to their sexuality. In the second interview, participants were able to assign meaning to specific events and organize them according to contextual value. Assuming that an individual's behavior becomes meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them (Patton, 2003), this interview protocol was advantageous in assisting members of dominant sexual identity to consider an aspect of themselves that they may have labeled without fully understanding the process by which that identity derived. By using reflective essays as third data collection method, researchers were able to capture differences in preferred styles of expression, beyond verbal communication.

## PROCEDURES

The research team followed an outline of five general stages of consensus (Hill, 1998), namely: (a) participant selection, (b) interviewing participants, (c) transcribing interviews, (d) data analysis (coding responses into domains, abstracting and auditing core ideas, and cross- analysis) and, (e) review and consultation by the team and auditors.

### *Participant Selection*

Purposeful sampling procedures were utilized for recruitment as this population's dominant cultural status was not assumed to be vulnerable or inaccessible. Participants that met stated criteria were recruited from two southeastern universities, one

southeastern urban public school, and a southeastern Community Service Board. The primary investigator attempted to further solicit the participation of higher education counselors from one southeastern predominantly African American university, one southeastern metropolitan urban university, and one southeastern predominantly White university. These sites were selected as a result of prolonged engagement. Prolonged engagement is a measure of trustworthiness that means that the researcher has an established rapport with participants and/or the site in which participants will be solicited (Newsome, Hays, & Christensen, 2008).

Prospective participants were provided with a letter of invitation and written informed consent (see Appendix C) that provided an explanation of the present study and stated that by receiving this information and completing the demographic worksheet, they are acknowledging and confirming their consent to voluntarily participate in the research study and that they have been informed of their rights as a participant. Interested informants were asked to complete the enclosed demographic worksheet and return the form to the primary researcher via standard mail.

This letter was distributed to 40 potential applicants, initially anticipating a 50% response rate. Of the 40 letters of invitation that were disseminated to recruitment sites, 16 prospective participants responded to the invitation to participate (40% response rate). The research team then selected 10 heterosexual counselors to participate in the study based on reports of demographic worksheets. In the event that new themes continuously emerged from initial sample, the remaining pool was maintained on file to be potentially used to achieve saturation. As a result of saturation of data being established sufficiently

with 10 participants, the remaining pool of applicants were not contacted for participation.

Selected participants were notified of selection and contacted via phone to coordinate initial interviews by the primary investigator. Informed consent was re-established verbally during the initial interviews.

### *Interviewing Participants*

The primary investigator conducted all interviews, utilizing an adopted version of Siedman's 3-series interview protocol. Interview protocol questions were modified by the research teams following data analysis and member checking of the first three participant interviews to ensure trustworthiness of the study (Hill et al., 2005). The first of three interviews of Siedman's (1998) protocol, established the context of the interviewees' experience. This phase allowed the interviewer and participant to examine the experience and place it into context. The task of the interviewer in this stage was to put the participant's experience into context by asking the participant in a 30-45 minute interview, to tell as much as possible about themselves in reference to their sexual identity up to the present time, going as far back as possible. Participants were invited to reconstruct their early experiences in their families, schools, with friends, and in their neighborhoods, as it relates to heterosexuality. The interviewer avoided asking such questions as, "Why did you become heterosexual?" Instead informants were asked how they became participating members of a dominant sexual group.

### *Interview One: Possible Focused Life History Interview Protocol*

1. Can you tell me as much as possible about your early experience as a heterosexual?

*Probing Question(s):*

1. What was your life like before you identified yourself as being heterosexual?
2. Can you tell me about your life as a heterosexual?
3. How did you come to identify yourself as heterosexual?
4. How do you remember feeling about being heterosexual?

The second interview allowed the participant to reconstruct the details of their experiences within the context in which it occurred (Siedman, 1998). The purpose of the second interview was to concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present experience in the topic area of study, asking them to recreate those details. In order to contextualize their experiences, the interviewer asked participants to talk about their relationships in reference to their heterosexual experiences. The primary question was established to help participants consider the developmental context of their experiences.

*Interview Two: Possible Details of Experience Interview Protocol*

1. Can you describe to me a specific pre-heterosexual experience?

*Probing Question(s):*

2. Can you describe a specific heterosexual experience?
3. Can you describe a specific heterosexual experience in counseling?
4. How did you feel about that experience?
5. What specific experiences established your sexual identity?
6. Can you describe specific experiences of an attraction to another person?
7. Can you describe to me a specific same-sex encounter?

Siedman (1998) proposes a third interview in which participants are asked to reflect on the meaning of their experience. However, in this study the last interview was

replaced by a reflective essay (see Appendix D). The essay focused on informants reflecting on meaning as suggested by Siedman (1998), but additionally allowed participants to derive at meaning absent of the interviewer which yielded additional discoveries. By changing this aspect of the protocol, the researcher increased the trustworthiness of the data collected by removing the physical presence of the interviewer and generating an alternate method of reporting. This method further required participants to look at their present experience in detail and within the context in which it occurred (Siedman, 1998). This diversification of data collection was helpful in establishing desirable conditions for reflecting upon how participants now identify themselves in their present lives. Essay protocol questions included:

1. How does your sexual identity, if at all, affect work with heterosexual clients?
2. How does it affect, if at all, your work with GLB clients?
3. Are there any final thoughts about heterosexual identity, the counseling process and/or this study in general?

All interviews were spaced out between three days and one week apart, with no longer than 10 days between interviews and essays. This allowed time for the participant to contemplate the preceding interview but not enough time to lose the connection between the two interviews (Siedman, 1998). The supplemental gain of several interviews over time was that the consistent interactions affected the development of the relationship between the informant and the interviewers in a positive manner. The primary investigator further established this relationship via telephone contacts, electronic correspondences, and letters to confirm scheduling and appointments. This increased interaction with the informants helped to diminish miscommunication-related



discrepancies and help to further establish a relationship between the investigator and the participant. This process likely yielded a more honest and concise data collection.

### *Transcribing Interviews*

After collecting data from informants, all data were transcribed by an assigned transcriber. Thus, it is important to note that while many qualitative researchers believe that the primary investigator should fully immerse themselves into the data and the experience of informants by facilitating all aspects of data collection and transcription exclusively (Hill et al., 2004), for the purpose of the project, the primary researcher found it to be more advantageous to withdraw from the data during the process of transcription. The purpose of this intentional disengagement was to provide the primary investigator an opportunity to review the data from a refreshed perspective. This technique proved to be beneficial as the primary investigator was able to review the data as a consensus team member with a refreshed perspective as opposed to the primary interviewer whom may possibly interpret the data in a way that attends to the informant/interviewer relationship rather than an objective observer. The transcriber for this project was a masters-level counseling student with academic training in research methodologies and experience as a research assistant on several qualitative projects. After the data was transcribed, the interviewer utilized previous interviews to check back with informants to clarify any ambiguities of the data provided and allow the participant to offer any additional information they deemed relevant. To ensure accuracy of transcription, the primary investigator reviewed all tapes following transcription to compare for accuracy. Once the accuracy was checked, the primary investigator omitted any information that could reveal the identity of the informant.

Next, completed transcription sets were forwarded to the participants for member checking to ensure that information collected and reported was precise and consistent with what they intended to convey. Participants also had the opportunity to edit any comments before approving. This system of “member check” (Hill et al., 2005) was important in establishing triangulation. The informants were then asked to submit their final reflection essay within five days of approving their first two transcripts. This process of triangulation further ensured the trustworthiness of the study.

### *Data Analysis*

The research team conducted preliminary analyses of completed data sets (i.e., transcription of first two interviews and the final essay). From that data set, the research team collaboratively generated preliminary domains and/or groupings for interpreted data. The consensus team met for coding of the first two complete data sets. Codes were added from the following data sets by the primary investigator and disseminated to rotating research teams for consensus. The research team collaboratively analyzed the first 8 interviews and then utilized the last two to see if any new domains emerged. This process is also referred to as stability checks (Patton, 2005). Stability checks are a process in which the majority of transcripts are analyzed first and additional transcripts are analyzed to see if any new domains, categories, or relationships emerge.

Preliminary codes and/or established terminology was extracted from existing literature on heterosexual identity development (Eliason, 1995; Mohr et al., 1999; Sullivan, 1998; Worthington et al., 2005, Worthington, et al., 2002) and LGB identity development (Cass, 1979; Klein, 1993; Troiden, 1988) to ensure referential adequacy (Newsome et al., 2008). Referential adequacy involves checking preliminary findings and

interpretations against archived raw data (i.e., existing literature, current research) to explore alternative explanations for findings that may emerge during this process. This process included the following steps: (a) analysis of each individual case, (b) cross analysis-analysis of categories across cases, (c) negative case analysis, and (d) examination and identification of patterns in the data. Once final domains and sub-categories were formulated, the primary researcher constructed and proposed a model for HID. The research team then met to achieve consensus regarding the proposed model.

#### *Review and Consultation by the Team and Auditor*

Review and consultation was an active and continuous process that occurred throughout the duration of the project. According to Hill et al. (2005), case analysis consists of: (a) developing coding domains within cases and arguing to consensus, (b) constructing core ideas with each domain and arguing them to consensus, and (c) submitting the domains and core ideas to an auditor and modifying them according to auditor's suggestions for revision. The research team followed this protocol. Ongoing consultation with an external auditor (i.e., dissertation chair) served the purpose of providing an external check on the inquiry process and research team's interpretations and confirming that the findings of this study are genuinely reflective of the participants' perspectives within the context of their natural environment. This further established trustworthiness of the study.

#### LIMITATIONS

CQR designs, in general, share some common limitations. The most obvious being the small sample size utilized (Hill et al., 2005). In this study, 10 participants were interviewed. This limitation was addressed by continuous member checking and cross-

analysis. Research team members analyzed and interpreted the initial data. As a result of no new themes emerging from the data, it was not necessary for the participant sample size to increase, as saturation was achieved within 10 participant data sets.

Additionally, potential researcher bias is a general limitation of this study. This issue was addressed by utilizing two teams of a total of seven researchers and a qualified auditor with varying demographics in the areas of ethnicity, gender, varying levels of counseling experience, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, prior to the collection of data, the research team met and discussed biases and expectations of the interview protocol. Each researcher was given the opportunity to answer a set of open-ended reflective questions to assist them in exploring and discussing their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings regarding this phenomenon and the design of the study. Addressing researcher bias was an on-going and continuous task in the consensus process. All team members were encouraged to be aware of each others biases and assumptions and agree to point them out in a respectful manner during the course of this discussion and throughout the process of reaching consensus. The explicit awareness of each member's unique perspective allowed the team to monitor bias through the coding process, selection of core domains, and development of proposed model. The author included a detailed description of each member's biases and expectations in the study. However, despite efforts to address this issue, the author was aware that it is was still likely that some findings were simply the result of the way in which the study was organized around the phenomenon, how interview questions were conceptualized and designed, the personal style of the interviewer and the prompts used, and ultimately, the lenses through which the data were interpreted.

It is also important to note that while research team members met face-to-face for several consensus meetings, some codes and domains were argued to consensus via electronic communication (e.g., telephone, email, and teleconference). While research team members were able to arrive at consensus regarding data, it is important to note that face-to-face communication may provide optimal conditions for facilitating consensus in CQR methodology (Hill et al., 1997, Hill et al., 2005).

Demographical characteristics of the participants were additionally a limitation. Participants were pulled from very specific regions of Virginia. These geographical limitations may suggest a limited understanding of this phenomenon as it pertains to cultural variables. Participant's age also ranged from the age of twenty-two to thirty-six, limiting the implications for lifespan development and maturation. Additionally, Caucasian and African American participants were the only ethnic/racial groups captured in this study. Including other ethnic minority groups may have yielded different results. Moreover, a majority of participants currently work in a college counseling setting, which may limit the implications and findings of this project.

Furthermore, the nature of this design was collaborative, in that it examined the intersection of two phenomenon- HID and the influences of HID on the counseling process. Thus, a study of either phenomenon as a sole entity may yield a richer depiction of both the participants' experiences and each phenomenon.

An additional limitation of this project was that the primary investigator was the sole interviewer. This was advantageous in establishing prolonged engagement and convenient sampling; however, utilizing a variety of interviewers to conduct interviews may have yielded different data.

Furthermore, the sampling method may have produced a biased sample. Simply agreeing to participate in the study suggests some bias regarding motivation for participation. Examining only the informants who agreed to participate does not account for the experiences of other counselors that chose not to participate and motivations for non-participation. Data collected from this group may have yielded different findings.

Lastly, the design of this project does not yield a statistically significant understanding of the phenomenon, limiting the generalizability of this study.

## Chapter Four

### RESULTS

The following chapter includes the presentation of: core domains, definitions and subcategories in each of the domains, and representative examples of the participants' statements as they were coded by and categorized by the CQR method to preserve the integrity of participants' experiences.

The CQR method (Hill et al., 1997, 2005) organizes qualitative data into three hierarchical levels. Research team members collaboratively arrived at consensus to generate these three levels: domains, categories and core ideas. The consensus research team developed preliminary domains from the transcripts from the open-ended data and the existing literature (reviewed in Chapter 2). Codes were audited by an external auditor (dissertation chair) on an ongoing basis and upon completion of data analysis. The data collection process was guided by two research questions:

1. How do dominant sexual identity group members (heterosexual counselors) conceptualize their sexual identity development?
2. How does counselors' sexual identity development influence the counseling process?

The data collected reflected participants conceptualization of their heterosexual identity development and its influences on the counseling process. The domains allowed for the identification and organization of participants' responses (e.g., core ideas) that appeared to be related to each other. After the core ideas were placed within domains, the core ideas within each domain were examined and cross-examined for commonalities and

these core ideas were collapsed into subcategories. Subsequently, core ideas were placed within categories, and categories were placed within domains. The team's decisions for domains, categories, and core ideas were made consensually after each member had individually examined and organized the data. Next, each consensus team member presented their coded data and rationales to the team. The team then discussed and debated the input of each member, until a consensus was achieved about domains, categories, and core ideas.

Domains were separated into two categories consistent with the research questions: Heterosexual Identity Development (HID) and HID and the Counseling Process. Frequency labels (general, typical, and variant; see Table 2) summarize the occurrence of the following themes among the participants' responses. According to CQR (Hill et al., 2005), *general* refers to a category endorsed by all participants ( $n=10$ ), *typical* refers to a category endorsed by 5 to 9 participants, and *variant* refers to a category endorsed by 2 to 4 participants. Categories endorsed by only 1 participant were considered *rare* and were not included in the final results. The research team decided that these rare results did not add to the study in a significant way.

Table 2

*Heterosexual Identity Development Domains and Frequency Labels*

Heterosexual Identity Domains	General	Typical	Variant
Inherent Orientation-Related Behavior	X		
Unreconciled Heterosexual Identity		X	
Critical Incident	X		
Passive Conceptualization			X



Active Conceptualization	X	
Identity Disintegration	X	
Heterosexual Identity Development	X	
Interdependent Heterosexual	X	
Independent Heterosexual		X
Unresolved Heterosexual		X

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Note.  $N=10$ . *General* = a category endorsed by all participants; *typical* = a category endorsed by 5 to 9 participants; *variant* = a category endorsed by 2 to 4 participants.

After domains were established and the research team then arrived at consensus concerning each code, the second aspect of data analysis was theory development. The primary investigator analyzed data and organized the domains into a prospective theory. The proposed theoretical model was presented to both research teams and debated to consensus. A description of HID domains and HID domains and the counseling process will be presented. A cross analysis of domains, categories, and frequencies will also be presented.

#### Conceptualizing Heterosexuality

Examination of data revealed 10 core domains for HID: (1) inherent orientation-related behavior, (2) unreconciled heterosexual identity, (3) critical incident, (4) passive conceptualization, (5) active conceptualization, (6) identity disintegration, (7) heterosexual identity development, (8) interdependent heterosexual, (9) independent heterosexual, and (10) unresolved heterosexual (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Themes Derived Concerning Heterosexual Identity Development*

Domains	Subcategories	Definition or Coding Criteria
Inherent	Childhood pre-sexuality	Ability to identify sexual
Orientation-Related	Heterosexual impulses	orientation's presence
Behavior	Behavioral responses to	inherently as
	emerging sexuality	consciousness emerged
	Inherent orientation responses	
	Early attraction to opposite sex	
Unreconciled	Gender defines sexual orientation	Acquired heterosexual
Heterosexual	Spirituality determines sexual	identity that is highly
Identity	orientation	influences by socio-
	Being rewarded for opposite sex	cultural factors and
	attraction	intertwined with gender
	Reinforcement of heterosexuality	identity
	Mimicking perceived	
	heterosexual relationship	
	Visible social expectations	
	Orientation confirmation	
	Gender role and expectations	
	become clear	

Critical Incident	Pregnancy	Relative and subjective incident that causes separation of synonymous gender and sexual identity
	Divorce	
	First sexual encounters	
	Exposure to non-heterosexual orientations	
Passive	Heterosexist behavior that leads to recycling back to unreconciled heterosexual identity	Limited reflection of critical incident defined by resistance and unwillingness to probe sexual identity
Conceptualization		
Active	Willing to ask one's self if their gay or lesbian  Experienced dissonance with spiritual values that relate to sexuality  Minority empathy  Engaged in explorative dissonance of inherent orientation  Increased empathy for LGB	Unrestricted reflection of critical incident defined by recognizing the disparity in heterosexual privilege
Conceptualization		

issues

Begin redefining of  
heterosexuality

Identity	Recognizing the gender roles	Separation of gender
Disintegration	have nothing to do with sexuality	identity and sexual
	Recognizing that masculinity and femininity to not define sexuality	identity
Heterosexual	Cognitive exploration	Purposeful exploration in
Identity	Behavioral exploration	search of understanding
Development	Sincere probing of sexual attraction, sexual preferences, and preferred modes of experiencing sex	inherent orientation
Interdependent	Possible incongruence with	Heterosexuality
Heterosexual	inherent orientation	intertwined and reliant
	Congruence with orientation is irrelevant	upon spiritual, individual, social, and cultural
	Unwilling to disconnect sexuality with other aspects of identity	identities
	Interconnectedness is purposeful and intentional	
	Heterosexuality is a cultural	

	expression	
Independent	Cognitive or behavioral	Explored heterosexuality
Heterosexual	exploration of inherent	that is not connected to or
	orientation	reliant upon various
	Able to redefine heterosexuality	cultural identities and is
	Does not see heterosexuality as	congruent with inherent
	the “normal” orientation	orientation
	Tend to believe that people are	
	either born heterosexual or	
	homosexual	
	LGB affirming attitudes	
Unresolved	Continues to explore sexual	Committed to
Heterosexual	attraction and preference	heterosexual identity, yet
	Committed to heterosexual	continues to question
	identity because of relational	inherent orientation or is
	preferences	comfortable with
		orientation and identity
		incongruence

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#### *Inherent Orientation-Related Behavior*

The inherent orientation-related behavior domain was present for all 10 (100%) of the participants. This domain was categorized as *general* as all participants endorsed this category. Participants described experiences and behaviors related to inherent sexuality in

late childhood and early adolescence. This domain was defined by recognition of heterosexuality as an initial impulse of emergent sexuality. This domain included the following subcategories: heterosexual impulses, behavioral responses to emerging sexuality, inherent orientation responses, early adolescent attraction to opposite sex, and same-sex physiological exploration. As participants were probed concerning pre-heterosexuality, all participants reported that prior to experiencing opposite sex feelings and sexual attractions that they were void of feelings of sexuality. Participants reported then experiencing an inherent orientation response or orientation-related behavior. This responsive behavior included: having crushes on the opposite sex, experiencing arousal when being exposed to opposite sex nudity, and not experiencing sexual arousal when being exposed to same sex nudity. Some participants demonstrated inherent orientation responses by reporting that same sex nudity elicited a curiosity response that was used to explore their own body sexually through masturbation or exploration of their own genitalia. One female participant stated:

I would say it was at 3 or 4 years old...that I would say that I was becoming sexual...in terms of heterosexual, I would say I started having feelings for guys...it would probably be kindergarten... I just assumed that's how I was...cause that's how I felt...and I enjoyed it! I have always been drawn to guys.

Similar responses were provided by the male participants reporting inherent orientation responses. However, male participant's inherent orientation responses included a comparison component, meaning that participants report demonstrating heterosexual behavioral responses that were later conceptualized as heterosexual through

exposure to alternative sexual orientations. When asked to provide information about early heterosexual experiences, one male participant reported:

...it [orientation-related behavior] was before I was becoming social as a human...I was very young I guess before I could even conceptualize being attracted to the opposite sex...I think when you identify as something is when you understand or realize there is an alternative...if there's more than one box to check you check a box. But if it's the only thing you know it's hard to identify as anything. It's just who you are, so you are just being. I was just acting on how I felt...I liked girls...I just wanted to touch them.

This domain also included a same-sex explorative component. Participants report experiences in which they probed the genitalia of the same sex as a source of comparison of their own genital development. However, participants further report that this exploration was void of sexual arousal or interest. For instance, two female participants reported an early sexual experience with another female in adolescence. However, both females reported that this interaction, while it was a sexual interaction, the exploration was about exploring their own sexuality consider these experiences an impulse of inherent sexual feelings towards the opposite sex. When further describing this experience one female participant reported:

I was not comfortable enough to explore how things felt with a boy at that age even though I wanted to. My friend and I just kissed and touched to see what it would feel like to be with a boy. We were only like 7 or 8...boys were not even on our radar...we were like practicing being with a boy.

Similarly, two male participants reported having similar experiences with their male friends in early adolescence. These participants suggested that while actual physical and sexual contact was frowned upon within their social groups, exposing their genitalia to each other was a part of their early sexual interactions. One participant stated:

We were like in the locker room or something...and one guy would like pull out his butt and of course, we all wanted to show him up...so the next kid would pull out his penis...and I remember looking at the other guys wondering how my penis sized up to the other guys...and how my body compared to theirs. I didn't feel aroused sexually or anything, but I wanted to look at other guys so I could figure out what mine [genitalia] should look like. It wasn't like when I saw a porno or anything...that stuff got me excited in a different way.

### *Critical Incident*

All participants reported varied experiences in this category that the research team deemed to be a subjective critical incident experienced by the participant that led to a conceptualization process. This domain was categorized as *general* as all participants reported experiencing this domain. Participants report experiencing the following critical incidents: first sexual encounter, pregnancy, education, exposure to alternative sexual identities, divorce, and spiritual dissonance. Such incidents were deemed to be critical by the consensus team because these incidents resulted in identity disintegration (separation of gender identity and sexual identity development processes), which led to participants realizing that their gender identities and sexual identities were interconnected, yet separate. One female participant said:



I remember after getting divorced feeling like I was just numb. I mean I didn't feel attraction towards any guys or females. I was just hurt and didn't want to even think about sex. It was at that time in my life that I really thought to myself, wow, now that my marriage has ended what does that say about me as a woman. I felt like I had like failed and I just didn't know what that meant about me as a female, you know. 'Cause the heterosexual dream is like to get married and have kids...and I did, well a kid, but I had failed at that. So I had to really not deal with my sexuality and figure what this all meant about me being a woman...and it had nothing to do with my being heterosexual or non-heterosexual. And I remember asking myself...wow, I feel numb towards guys, does this mean I like girls or I want to try being with a woman...and I explored that and thought about it but not for long because I was like, yeah I like men in general...in that way...just not right now.

Male participants reported critical incidents related to education and being exposed to non-heterosexual persons. One male participant's critical incident included both education of sexuality existing on a continuum and exposure to a non-heterosexual person. This participant stated:

Like in my multicultural counseling class...the guy was talking about Kinsey's scale and I thought it was so neat...it like made me really have to think about things. And I knew that this one guy in our class was gay cause he was like so open about it, but if he had not said he was gay...I would not have been able to tell because he was like very masculine in stuff and he really chimed in on the conversation of Kinsey using his self as an example and I like really got what he

was saying. That was weird for me cause then I had to ask myself could I be gay? Am I like attracted to this guy or do I just admire like qualities about him like his courage to say that in class or just self-disclose, cause I wouldn't have done that...you know you ask yourself the question of how did you become [heterosexual] and so much stuff come to play...what if I was gay like and I can look at guys and say he's attractive guy you know and umm...I realized that I can feel all of these things and still realize that I am heterosexual still...but now I understand the complexity and how involved that is.

### *Unreconciled Heterosexuality*

Unreconciled heterosexuality was a domain endorsed by 9 (90%) participants (5 females and 4 males), thus categorized as *typical*. This domain was defined by limited awareness of sexual identity, high awareness of sexual orientation, inability to delineate gender identity and heterosexuality, high socio-cultural influence, low identity and orientation congruence, and being rewarded or affirmed for confirming heterosexuality. Many participants described experiences that occurred after consciousness and in early adolescence, which they were able to identify and acknowledge as heterosexual experiences. These experiences intentionally involved the opposite sex and were purposeful explorations of opposite sex interactions. Several participants report this experience happening between fourth and sixth grade. Reporting and demonstrating high awareness of sexual orientation at this stage, many participants reported having been influenced by many macro and micro socio-cultural factors, including: modeling parental relationships, learning that heterosexuality was equivalent to being a “good” Christian,

and feeling that they were supposed to be or “should” be heterosexual. One female participant stated [in terms of heterosexuality]:

Yes, it was always implied...You don't talk about anything but heterosexuality...Being raised Roman Catholic, everything is implied heterosexual, just always assumed. It was just assumed that everybody was heterosexual. Guys were supposed to be with girls...any other ways of coming together were unnatural and not talked about...at all.

Many participants reported feeling as though heterosexuality was reinforced and rewarded. One male participant stated:

Man, when I had my first crush with a girl down the street, my whole family was like, ahhh...how cute...and I almost felt like they were saying I was doing the right and thing and that I should continue to feel that way about girls. It was like when I came out as definitely heterosexual, it made everyone happy and as a kid, you want everyone to be happy and pleased...so I kept doing it. I mean...I wanted to do it [be attracted to the opposite sex] anyway, so this just made it more satisfying almost!

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of this category is identity integration, which refers to an inability to delineate between gender and heterosexuality. Male participants used words such as heterosexuality, masculinity, and manhood, synonymously throughout interviews. Similarly, female participants used heterosexuality synonymously with, being a female, femininity, being a girl, and gender roles. For example, one male participant stated:

A person who is heterosexual could very strongly identify with just the masculinity if they were male...just like...they are attracted to women they only think about women...so they are very masculine into their thoughts and their behaviors.

This participant interchanged the words masculine and heterosexual throughout the first interview. Likewise, another male participant stated:

I mean there is a lot of pressure on guys to be heterosexual. Like guys rough each other up and have to be very physical to show how heterosexual they are so that they won't be picked on. Anytime you take a group of all males, the group has to decide who is like the alpha male so it is either the guy who is very strong and athletic and heterosexual or the guy who is able to like get all the girls to do stuff. It's weird...I never thought about it like that. And then, the feminine or sissy guy in the group is the gay guy...whether he is or isn't...he is not strong or good with girls so he is not heterosexual.

For female participants, gender roles and gender identity were also synonymous with heterosexuality. Female participants described attempting to understand their heterosexuality through the lens of and within the context of gender roles, meaning that being a heterosexual female means getting married, having babies, and falling into a traditional female role. This female gender role includes being a mother and wife. One female participant reported:

I have always wanted to have babies and get married and...I remember playing house at a very young age with my friends and like my cousins and we were like acting out what we thought all of this [heterosexuality] meant. I would like hold

my belly like I'm pregnant and he's my husband and I have to cook dinner. I didn't know much but I knew that being heterosexual or like being a girly girl was a part of life for girls...I mean you can't have babies if you don't have a husband so you kind of have to be heterosexual to get married and stuff. That was just how God designed this whole thing to work. You figure that out early in it plays out in every area of you life and really like drives you I guess to work at being heterosexual...like wearing cute clothes, and wearing make up...and learning how to flirt and get boys to look at you...or even pretend like you had boobs...you had to like learn like to put your heterosexuality out there or you wouldn't get a husband. That sounds silly now...but that's what I thought like as a child.

#### *Passive and Active Conceptualization*

For many participants, critical incidents led to reported experiences of either active or passive conceptualization. Categorized as *variant*, only 1 white, male participant reported *passive conceptualization*. The passive conceptualization domain was defined by limited reflection of the critical incident, resistance and unwillingness to probe sexual identity, and unacknowledged heterosexist behavior reported a high incidence of recycling back to unreconciled heterosexual identity. Participants that experienced a critical incident that did not lead to a deeper conceptualization of their own sexuality or sexual orientation were categorized as having experienced passive conceptualization. Additionally, participants reporting passive conceptualization made minimal shifts in dualistic thinking patterns and continue to view heterosexuality and gender identity synonymously. For example, this male participant stated:

This kid that I had known like my whole life... I mean he had slept with all the girls and I remember like all the guys...wanted to like be like him cause he was just known for like always messing around...like sexually with all the girls in our school and stuff. And like years later one of my boys told me he was like gay all of a sudden. That really messed me up. I just didn't get it...and I like wanted to be like this kid. So I scared myself like...I didn't even want to go there. I'm definitely not gay...I didn't like him like that. I mean when I realized that this kid was gay, I was like how did that happen. I was like just kind of, not disgusted, it just doesn't make sense to me. I know that people are who they are but my beliefs are just like being gay is a sin...really more than a sin, an abomination, and I feel bad that life is tough for people like that, but I just believe that we choose to either be gay or not. And I had heard some bad stuff happened to him, like he got beat up pretty bad by some group of guys and I felt bad, but he shouldn't have chose to be that way, I guess. I mean...I don't know...I just have values, you know.

For this participant, learning that an acquaintance with which he had closely associated and admired to some extent, was gay, was a critical incident. This critical incident caused the participant to begin to reflect upon sexual orientation identity. However, this participant's unwillingness to probe his own values, beliefs, and feelings regarding sexuality and sexual orientation, suggest a passive conceptualization process.

Conversely, categorized as *typical*, 9 participants reported engaging in an active conceptualization process that was defined by unrestricted reflection of critical incident(s), recognition of the disparity in heterosexual privilege, engagement in explorative dissonance of inherent orientation, increased empathy for LGB issues, and

beginning to redefine heterosexuality. Of the 9 participants that reported experiences in this domain, 8 participants identified with a non-dominant cultural group including: African American and/or female. These participants acknowledged recognizing the disparity in heterosexual privilege as a component of active conceptualization. One African American female participant shared:

I remember watching something on television once...it was like this program about what gay people go through and I was very young at the time. I had to be like 9 or so...but this gay girl was being beat up by all these guys because she was gay and I just remember thinking about what does gay mean and why do people hate it so much...am I gay...and so what if she's gay...why would people try to hurt her like that. And I remember comparing to all the stuff I was learning about history in elementary school about black people and how the same groups of white men would beat up people and hurt people the same way for any reason. It just made me mad...and scared too. Even though I wasn't gay...I was black...and that could still be me getting my ass kicked for something I have no control over. I mean, that's when I thought to myself...maybe gay people don't have control over being gay...cause who would choose to get their ass kicked and have to deal with discrimination and prejudice and they were just trying to be who they were and live their life as God created them to be. It just didn't make sense...not for awhile. But I think that's what kept me from being a bigot in some regards...I just thought it was unfair to them as gay...and me as a black woman.

### *Identity Disintegration*

This domain was a *typical* response experienced by 7 participants (6 female and 1 male) and refers to the separation of gender identity and sexual identity and was reported to be a response following a critical incident. One female participant reported:

After going through that [divorce] and still being a mother...even though now I wasn't a wife...I don't know...it just felt like no more rules applied. I realized that being heterosexual didn't guarantee anything...and I just didn't want to be the submissive, domesticated women that I thought I had to be...and he [ex-husband] thought I was suppose to be like that...and I did too even though I wasn't like that...I just remember thinking that being straight isn't easy either...being a woman is just hard whether your gay or straight.

The following subcategories were reported by several participants in this domain: recognizing that gender roles have nothing to do with sexuality and recognizing that masculinity and femininity do not define sexuality. The 1 male participant that reported experiencing identity disintegration reported a realization that masculine and feminine traits did not define sexuality. In this interview, this participant revealed:

I have always been a very feminine kind of guy...I mean even as a child I was closer to my mom and identified with all the range of emotions she shared with me. As a child I hid that part of myself and of course I could not have been the feminine guy in my group of friends...I would have got picked on a lot and my friend would have called me gay or thought I was gay I guess. But now I know that it does not mean that I am gay. And now as an adult I am glad that I am the



way I am [sensitive] because it helps me to understand my wife better and be a better husband.

### *Heterosexual Identity Development*

As participants regularly disclosed experiences of inherent heterosexual responses, several participants began to report a process of exploring their inherent sexual orientation after realizing that sexual identity was influenced by a variety of variables and that they may identify with heterosexuality by default. During this process, participants report redefining what their individual heterosexuality meant. This domain was categorized as *typical* as the 9 participants experiencing this domain also experience active conceptualization. One female participant reported:

I could have been gay and my life...my upbringing manipulated that. That's crazy; huh...I just needed to make sure I was really straight. I mean...I guess I knew I was but as all my friends started to experiment in college...like messing around with other girls and stuff and coming out...the question was just right in my face. I couldn't avoid it. So I asked myself the question...I explored like who am I sexually attracted to...who do I fantasize about...like who could I actually be in a relationship with. And that question was the only one that was clear...I could never see myself actually being in a relationship with a women...like a real serious and committed relationship...I just don't like girls in that way. But I did discover that I find some women attractive...maybe even sexually attractive...but I decided that I can feel that way and still be heterosexual.

Subcategories in this domain include: an explorative component that may be cognitive or behavioral, purposeful and self-directed probing of sexual attraction, sexual

preferences, and preferred modes of experiencing sex. The explorative element of this domain includes both cognitive and behavior exploration. Cognitive exploration implies that the participant was intentional and purposeful in seeking expanded or additional information about sexuality to understand the complexity of their own sexuality, as well as others. Cognitive exploration may also include uninhibited sexual fantasies while masturbating or experimenting with watching a variety of pornography to explore levels of sexual arousal. Behavioral exploration implies that the participant reported experiencing physical sexual interactions (i.e., sexual intercourse with same or opposite sex, sexual activities including others). For instance, one female participant reported:

When I was in undergrad...my group of female friends was really sexually open. It like wasn't weird to kiss my girlfriends or make out with my sisters [sorority sisters] in some crazy drinking game. At the time...it just wasn't a big deal...we were always making-out in stuff...I knew I was sexually attracted to girls...I had hot friends! But I never wanted to be like a girlfriend to any of them...and none of them ever came at me like that either. It was just fun to make out with your friends. I never thought about it like that until now. I guess that's how I know I'm not a lesbian...I don't want to be in a relationship with a female. I always that that was the difference.

A key component of this domain is that exploration is uninhibited, intentional, and goal-directed. While the goal of this exploration is to gain an increased understanding of one's own sexuality and to self-authorize heterosexuality and other sexual orientations, the intention of exploration is to investigate one's inherent sexual orientation and seek congruence with one's sexual identity. Behavioral exploration was a

reported experience of female participants. Male participants reported cognitive exploration only. Attempting to explain cognitive explorative processes that solidified his heterosexuality, one male participant reported:

I remember seeing gay porn once accidentally...it was two guys and I was curious as to what like would happen...it was like I couldn't turn away, but I didn't want to look. I was like a freshman in college...what I do remember is not feeling sexually aroused...I was so glad about that. Cause its kind of like you know that you are definitely not gay cause you like feel it within yourself...but until you really have to like be in a situation that you can make sure you don't have like some sexual response or like erection to that kind of stuff...you just got to make sure. And I didn't have that kind of response, I guess...and that's when I was like...bet, yeah...I knew I wasn't gay.

#### *Interdependent Heterosexuality*

The following domain was endorsed by 7 participants and categorized as *typical*. In this domain participants define their sexuality as an interconnected and interdependent aspect of their total identity. Research team members define this domain as 1 of 3 heterosexual dimensions. Interdependent heterosexuality is a heterosexual identity that is intertwined and reliant upon spiritual, individual, social, and cultural identities in an individual. Participants within this dimension experience their sexual identity simultaneously with other aspects of their identity and feel that these different dimensions of a person should not function separately. For example, several participants report feeling as though their sexual identity is an outward expression of their spiritual values and because their spiritual identity is the central or core dimension of who they are, then

their sexual identity is a merely a construct of a more germane aspect of themselves. For instance, one female informant reported:

I mean I get that sexuality is complex and I agree with that...and I respect that and honor that in other people, but for me...as a Christian, I am saying that I believe in the word of God that says that he made women to be with men and I value and love that about my faith...so being heterosexual is a part of who I am as a Christian...that is just my belief. Part of surrendering my life to Christ is about me being heterosexual and living my life that way as I look for a man to spend the rest of my life with and procreate...and all that good stuff.

All male participants that reported experiencing active conceptualization consequently endorsed this category. Subcategories of this domain include: possible incongruence with inherent orientation, congruence with orientation is irrelevant, unwillingness to disconnect sexuality with other aspects of identity, and interconnectedness of identities as purposeful, intentional, and a cultural expression. These subcategories suggest that interdependent heterosexuals are less concerned with identifying with a sexual orientation that is consistent with inherent –orientation related behavior and are more concerned with adopting a sexual identity that is an outward reflection of their beliefs and values related to another aspect of their identity (i.e., spirituality).

#### *Independent Heterosexuality*

Only 2 participants (both female) reported experiencing this dimension of heterosexuality categorized as *variant*. This domain is defined by explored heterosexuality that is not connected to or reliant upon various cultural identities and is

congruent with inherent orientation. Participants described this experience as resulting after having considerable cognitive and behavioral exploration. When asked to describe a defining moment as a heterosexual, one female participant stated:

I remember I participated in this sexuality workshop...and part of what we had to do was like watch several hours of all different kinds of porn...like guy on guy, girl on guy, girl on girl and so on...and it was like we had to record our arousal to all these different kinds of porn. And it was when I realized that I may have a sexual attraction to women...and I realized that this didn't mean that I was not heterosexual...cause I would never pursue this attraction but I may fantasize about being with a woman and with a man at the same time...and I could never do it in real life...but it just made me realize how many different ways you can feel about lots of different sexual things but its all of those things, plus making a decision about how you are going to identify given consideration of all these things that make up your sexuality. It was just an enlightening experience that has really helped me understand the sexuality of myself and my clients better. 'Cause if I can have these range of feelings and still be heterosexual, than other people probably have this range of feelings also.

Subcategories in this domain included: cognitive or behavioral exploration of inherent orientation, redefining heterosexuality, recognition that heterosexuality is not the "normal" orientation, tendency to believe that people are either born heterosexual or homosexual, and LGB affirming attitudes. Both female participants reported that they believe that sexual orientation was a function of biology and nature. Similarly, both female participants reported LGB affirming attitudes. One female participant stated:

Being gay is not about not being heterosexual. It's about being gay. People need to understand that sexual orientation is biologically predetermined. But I get upset...when people make being heterosexual or gay or bi [sexual] or lesbian about a choice. We shouldn't limit our understanding to this narrow perspective.

For me...I just try to be an ally in my personal life as well as my professional life.

Another female participant describing how her heterosexual identity affects her work with LGB clients wrote in her reflective essay:

Internally, I have felt at times a sense of guilt-guilt from the privilege of having unearned privilege of being heterosexual. I have never acknowledged this to a client and I have not experienced a client addressing this difference. I've actually never had a GLB client voice the difference in our sexuality or ask about mine. I keep a Safe Zone sticker on my office door and have books, etc. around my office in the effort to communicate I am a GLB ally.

### *Unresolved Heterosexuality*

Categorized as *variant*, 2 female participants report continual questioning and probing of sexual orientation, despite having committed to a heterosexual identity. This domain was only a reported experience of female participants. This domain was defined by participants who are currently committed to a heterosexual identity, yet continue to question inherent orientation or is comfortable with orientation and identity incongruence. For instance, one female participant said:

I feel like my sexual self came out more in that relationship [first long term heterosexual relationship]...I felt like I could honestly talk about my sexual attractions towards females and I hadn't shared that with anyone prior to that

relationship...I always new that I had sexual feelings towards females but...my relationship helped me mature a lot with that. I mean...I guess it helped me to ask myself questions about what I liked and I was surprised by my answers but not really...I don't know. But how a like women doesn't change that I want to be with a man...its weird...but I don't think I would have been able to be honest with myself if I didn't have that relationship...that I could be honest with him and myself.

Subcategories in this domain include: continual exploration of sexual attraction and preferences and a commitment to heterosexual identity because of relational preferences. Participants reported experiencing this domain, attribute heterosexual identity to relational interests or wanting to be in an intimate relationship with an individual of the opposite sex, although they acknowledge sexual attractions towards the same sex. For instance, one female disclosed:

I think I have always like to look at women...of course you look at women like I want her boobs, I want her ass, ahhh, I would kill for her flat stomach...but occasionally I might have a thought like, she's hot or she's really attractive. I wondered...what that meant about me as a heterosexual woman. Of course, I wouldn't like ever hit on a girl I thought was attractive that way...cause my feelings were not about intimacy per se...I don't know...I think of it like a lust thing...nothing real, I guess."

### Heterosexuality and the Counseling Process

Examination of data regarding HID and the counseling process revealed seven domains: *unawareness, assumed heterosexuality, dissonance, increased insight, minority*

*focus, ambivalence, and professional identity congruence* (see Table 4). Core ideas, which were direct quotes from participant transcripts generated by the coding team, were assigned to the most appropriate domains. Sub-themes or categories were developed from related core ideas and collapsed into relevant domains.

Table 4  
*Themes Derived Concerning Heterosexual Identity Development and the Counseling Process*

Domains	Definition Coding Criteria	General	Typical	Variant
Unawareness	Never having thought about  how their heterosexual  identity affects/influences  counseling	X		
Assumed Orientation	Assuming that their client's  are heterosexual		X	
Heterosexuality	heterosexual identity  development was normal and  like everyone else who is  heterosexual  Heterosexual clients  experience heterosexuality  the same way they do			



Dissonance	Feelings of concern as to how their unaware worldview has impacted the worldview they assume of clients  Questioning if assumption about heterosexual clients are accurate	X
Increased Insight	Through examination of heterosexuality, they need to reevaluate how heterosexual identity development interacts with the counseling process with heterosexual and non-heterosexual clients	X
Minority Focus	Heterosexuality affects the counseling process when working with non-heterosexual clients	X
Eros Interplay	Heterosexuality affects the counseling process when working with heterosexual clients of opposite sex and sexual attraction is possible	X

Ambivalence	Being aware that heterosexuality affects the counseling process but unsure as to whether to broach the issue or disregard	X
Professional Identity	Feeling that achieved or	X
Congruence	independent heterosexual status has improved effectiveness as a counselor	

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Note.  $N=10$ . *General* = a category endorsed by all participants; *typical* = a category endorsed by 5 to 9 participants; *variant* = a category endorsed by 2 to 4 participants.

### *Unawareness*

When asked to reflect upon and describe how heterosexuality influences or affects the counseling process, all participants initially reported they had never thought about how their heterosexual identity affects and/or influences counseling process. Thus, this domain was categorized as *general* as evidenced by full endorsement of the entire sample population. Many participants used the terms “counseling process” and “counseling relationship” interchangeably. One male participant stated:

I guess I never thought about that...how it affects the counseling process...I mean I am sure it does because all aspects of culture really affect the counseling relationship so...I guess...I just didn't think about it. I guess when I work with like clients who are homosexual...I really feel like the entire counseling relationship is in the context of both our sexuality because they are like...or

identify as gay or whatever...and I assume they know I am not...and that is something they have to negotiate I'm sure...and I have to also, I guess. I don't know...I guess I just didn't think about it...cause I'm heterosexual and all so you don't really have to think about it as much...as if like I were a gay counselor...I don't know.

Similar feelings were captured by a female participant in her reflective essay. She wrote:

Before participating in this study I honestly would say, and it is hard to admit, I never really thought about how my own heterosexual identity affects my work with heterosexual clients. I think I have always "assumed" that my identity development was similar to that of other heterosexual people. But, I now realize this is a very naïve assumption on my part. I now wonder how my own worldview has affected the worldview I assume about my clients...However, I now realize I can't make that assumption.

#### *Assumed Heterosexuality*

Many participants made report a monolithic perspective associated with heterosexuality, assuming that all clients were heterosexual until otherwise informed. Consequently, this domain was categorized as *typical* as seven participants (3 females and 4 males) report shared perspectives in this domain. Research team members defined the following domain by participants' assumptions that their heterosexual identity and/or identity development was normal and like everyone else who is heterosexual. One female participant, in response to a question concerning how her heterosexual world view affected her counseling practice, responded by saying:

I think the biggest thing is my underlying assumption of just like that everybody is heterosexual. That you know that I just automatically go in when I'm meeting somebody...I do it less now for sure because I've worked with a lot more diverse clients...but I think the biggest one is just assuming at first step everybody's heterosexual and then my next hesitation comes in and goes ok stop doing that...so I think that affects the counseling process because I'm still using the language that could be biased...so I'm more aware of trying to say do you have a partner are you in a relationship, versus do you have a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Several participants experienced this domain through over-identifying with heterosexual clients and assuming that they could better relate to their issue from their heterosexual perspective and within the context of their own heterosexual experiences. For instance, one male participant reported:

I might could relate more to some of the dynamics of men and women's relationships as far as...men being from Mars and women being from Venus...the disconnection of the perception and putting those together and kind of how sometimes society even just parents influences us to think a certain way sometimes as simple as boys in blue women in pink...one women [client] asked me just how ya'll men can just stick your [penis gesture] in a whole bunch of different people you know...but I explained to her from the way I look at part of it is how what we are taught [as men] when we are younger...umm men are taught to go out and hunt women and get as much as you can and if you don't get a woman then you must be gay.

Similar examples of identifying with heterosexual clients were reported by both male and female participants in this domain. Likewise, one female participant noted in her reflective essay:

In working with heterosexual clients, I see some heterosexual women aligning themselves with their perception of my experience. I had similar experiences in dating or experienced something similar to what they imagine they will have in future marriage. Sometimes it feels as if there is an implied 'we're in the same club'. I have not had the experience of a client asking me directly if I am heterosexual but I have had several ask if I was married or had been married. Most of those questions originated after noticing pictures of my son in my counseling office. This 'we're in the same club' feel has seemed to open a usually closed boundary in discussing my personal life as well as with some clients helping to create perceived similarities even if actual similarities do not exist.

### *Dissonance*

The following domain attempted to capture feelings of concern as to how participants' unaware worldview has impacted the worldview they assume of clients. Participants experiencing this domain demonstrated a desire to understand how their behaviors may infer heterosexual orientation and how that has and will impact their work with clients. Participants experiencing dissonance concerning HID and the counseling process reported experiencing these feelings with both heterosexual and non-heterosexual clients. This domain was categorized as *typical* as six participants (5 female and 1 male)

reported feeling related to this domain. One female participant, articulating how her heterosexual identity affects her work with LGB clients, wrote:

I think that my heterosexual identity affects my work with GLB clients primarily through my lack of being able to relate to their experiences. What I mean is that because my family and culture has always emphasized heterosexual development, my understanding of the development of GLB client's identity is somewhat limited. While I have taken course work and attempt to understand my client's world view, I believe that because I have not been through their experiences, there is a limit to my understanding of their life experiences. For example, when I was the co-leader of the gay men's group, there would be topics that would arise where I would have no knowledge of and felt that I would need to have them educate me. At times, I would feel uncomfortable given my lack of knowledge, and I am sure that the discomfort has affected my work with clients from different backgrounds. While I try not to let it influence my work, I think because I feel out of my "element" if you will with certain topics, I feel that I hold myself back as a counselor. How do I hold myself back? Usually I become less willing to challenge clients and feel less willing to take risks in the therapy relationship. Thus, I feel my work with GLB clients is largely affected by my lack of knowledge and experience. Thus, at times I wonder if the therapy relationship is affected.

Several female participants reported similar feelings. Only one male participant reported a similar discourse:

I am, however, more sensitive when working with GLB clients because they are in the minority and I am a member of the majority population. I want to make

sure my client's understand that while I can empathize with their situation I cannot truly, or pretend to truly understand their situation, but I know that our different worldviews collide at times in the counseling process and I wonder how that affects them in therapy.

Additionally, some participants expressed experiencing this dissonance regarding clients who identified as heterosexual. One female participant stated:

Basically, I feel I make assumptions about my heterosexual clients that are more than likely not accurate. I have never really questioned my heterosexuality and I assume my clients more than likely have not either. However, I now realize I can't make that assumption. Participating in this study has really made me reexamine my assumptions and those I make about others. I realize I now need to be more aware of all of my client's identity development, even sexual identity, even if they say it is a non issue.

### *Increased Insight*

Perhaps one of the most promising results revealed within this domain was that all participants reported that through examination of their heterosexuality, they realized the need to reevaluate how heterosexual identity development interacts with the counseling process with both heterosexual and non-heterosexual clients. The domain was categorized as *general* and endorsed by the entire sample population. Participants reported this increased insight in various ways. Some participants reported increased self-awareness. For instance, in a reflective essay one female participant stated:

I have really enjoyed being a part of this study. I felt that the interviews really highlighted for me my heterosexual identity in ways that I had not thought about.

After learning more recently about models of sexual identity development and working with LGBT clients, I have started to realize more about my own sexual identity development and that it is not so black and white. Participating in this study has really made me rethink many things and I really hope to continue my journey.

Another male participant wrote in his reflective essay:

By having my heterosexuality explored through this study, I have learned about myself in ways I have never thought of before. My responses to the questions were not easily processed because I had never been asked about my heterosexuality in that context.

Other participants demonstrated and reported increased insight concerning their work as counselors as they reflected on the implications of HID and the counseling process. For example, a male participant wrote:

I feel like I'm much more cautious in my approach. I think this has to do with my ignorance of other sexual orientations. I feel out of my element. I don't want to assume so I am sure to be very careful with my words and actions. I'm invested in the GLB clients but I don't instantly connect and get down to business like I do with my heterosexual female clients. Realizing all of this has reinforced the need to study diverse cultures, sexual orientations, etc. if I am to improve my effectiveness as a helping professional. This study has definitely left me curious and with questions about how heterosexual identity is determined. Did I have a choice when I was a child? Was I born this way? Was I influenced and rewarded by friends, family and media to be heterosexual? I will have to do more personal



reflection and research to get one step closer to finding the answers to these questions I have.

Similar responses were reported by female participants. One female describes:

By going through this process, I realized that I have to have a more open mind when dealing with these students as their experience in life and in their relationships may involve some things that I have never experienced such as discrimination because of my sexual orientation. There needs to be a greater checking of my opinions since I don't inherently agree with the lifestyle they have chosen.

One male participant reflected on how participation in heterosexual identity reflection activities has increased his insight concerning other issues of culture. In his interview, he stated:

I am pretty sure it would especially [affect me as a counselor] with gender issues, too. Gender identity issues seem to affect how clients see their sexual identity or heterosexual self...I could talk to them about the knowledge I gained about that in this project.

Most participants reported increased insight within their reflection essay. This domain has significant implications for counseling training and future research.

### *Minority Focus*

Several participants reported feeling as though their heterosexuality affects the counseling process only when working with non-heterosexual clients. A key component of this domain was the participants focus on non-heterosexual clients. This category was

endorsed by five clients (4 male and 1 female). This domain was primarily experienced by male participants. One male participant stated:

I do tend to ask more questions seeking to understand the GLB perspective. I think that my heterosexuality plays out when I work with GLB students. I have also noticed that a GLB student's sexual orientation is more on the forefront of conversation versus someone of heterosexual orientation – just because it is a social minority perspective. It is rare a heterosexual client will have their sexual orientation at the forefront of their conscience. I guess that's why it is not a part of the counseling process so much.

In the same way, only one female participant expressed feelings consistent with this domain. This female participant shared a similar perspective, reporting:

I do believe my sexuality has been a subtle presence with a few clients who were questioning their sexuality or who were openly gay. They voiced resentment towards friends and families in their lives who were heterosexual. I did not broach the subject of my own heterosexuality but considered it. With one client in particular, I do not think it would have been therapeutically beneficial to raise the question at that point in therapy. She is an ongoing client so I may have the opportunity in the future to do so. With GLB clients coming in with presenting problems that are not overtly about sexual identity, I have found my sexuality to be much of a presence.

### *Eros Interplay*

This domain was identified by the research team as eight participants consistently reported that they believed that their heterosexuality affects the counseling process when

working with heterosexual clients of opposite sex and sexual attraction is possible. This domain was categorized as *typical*. Similar experiences reported by participants in this domain suggested a concept first identified by Freud asserting that we are born with co-existing life and death instincts (Freud, 1927). *Eros* is the life instinct. The domain Eros Interplay suggests a reaction to such instincts that operate to meet the basic human need for love and intimacy, sex, and survival of the individual and the species. Thus, although ethically moderated, participants report connecting with opposite sex heterosexuals on a very basic and primitive attraction level. For example, one female participant reported:

There are brief moments when I really identify as a heterosexual woman in counseling. I feel this attraction that feels like ‘Oh, that’s a man (or so manly) and I like that’-meaning when a man acts or behaves in such a way that is stereotypically ‘male’. Those behaviors, of course, have to be safe and mutual, not misogynist, and with consent. The commonalities of those moments are times when a man I feel attracted to has either physically or verbally ‘taken charge’-subtle but apparent. They are typically fleeting and not long lasting but obvious to me in my reaction internally. I’ve been surprised by that attraction point and have at times struggled with adapting that attraction into my feminist and counselor identity but it is definitely there.

Likewise, a male participant describes similar impulses in his reflective essay. He wrote:

I believe my heterosexual identity has an impact on my work with heterosexual clients. Since I’m attracted to women I tend to feel more comfortable with and attentive to female clients. For example, there is a very basic response to female

clients that are attractive. I find myself engaging in the counseling process more attentively. I'm more intrigued by what they have to say. I'm more motivated to assist female clients and work to resolve the concerns they present to me. I guess you could say I'm more invested in them to an extent than my male clients.

### *Ambivalence*

Both findings in semi-structured interviews and reflective essay revealed feelings of ambivalence as participants expressed that they were aware that their heterosexuality affected the counseling process but unsure as to whether to broach the issue or disregard. This domain was categorized as *general* as the entire sample population endorsed this domain. One male participant stated during his interview:

I know that it affects the counseling process but so...I mean, not like that...it's just, what do you do with that. When it's a female that there is some apparent attraction there, it seems like it would be unethical to even discuss that. It would be like confirming that the attraction is mutual when in all reality it isn't. It's just an inherent response that you can't really help...you just have to try to respond in a therapeutic and ethical way...I don't know though. What would you do in that situation?

Other participants had experienced similar ambivalence, one female participant wrote in a reflective essay:

I am well aware that my heterosexuality affects the counseling process after engaging in this reflective exercise. I continue to question to what extent my heterosexuality is salient and how, if at all, should I respond to this dynamic in therapy. In looking for answers within ACA ethical standards and codes, there is

nothing specific about this subject matter. Although, much is implied regarding sexual contact with clients, this topic has been overlooked by policy makers. This would leave me to believe that I am to determine how I should handle this situation in an ethical and therapeutic way, based on my 'best judgment'. Unfortunately, I feel ill-equipped to make those kinds of decisions so I simply ignore the subject and focus on the client.

### *Professional Identity Congruence*

Only 2 participants (1 male and 1 female) reported feeling that an achieved or independent heterosexual status has improved their effectiveness as a counselor. These participants were able to conceptualize and articulate that a deeper understanding of their own heterosexual identity development has increased their effectiveness as a counselor. Professional identity congruence suggests that an individual recognizes the complexity of sexuality and variations in worldviews concerning themselves and others. This understanding is reflected in their work with clients as they are able to conceptualize the presenting issues of clients in a cognitively complex manner that suggests minimal bias. These participants were able to additionally relate this process to improving the counselor training and increasing counselor effectiveness with GLB clients. For example, one male participant stated:

Counselors who identify with the majority when it comes to their sexual identity may be too desensitized to their own sexuality that they may not explore a client who has a similar disposition. Conversely, when working with the GLB client they may be too sensitive to their client's disposition thus failing to explore other areas of their identity like, gender, race and spirituality. By having my

heterosexuality explored through this study, I have learned about myself in ways I have never thought of before. This has helped me to become a more effective counselor I believe. My responses to the questions were not easily processed because I had never been asked about my heterosexuality in that context. In the end, counselors need to be aware of their blind spots because when we are similar in certain social constructs we tend to assume instead of exploring, instead we focus on the overt and sometimes covert differences that are on the forefront of our minds and that of society's.

The female participant related increased insight to increased counselor effectiveness by reporting:

*One comment I have is that I feel this would be a good reflective activity for Master Counseling students to experience. A deep exploration into their heterosexuality...in a class such as Multicultural Counseling would really help them to be better counselors. This experience for me has really helped me to understand how my cultural identities affect the counseling process...and I think that because of this activity I will be a better counselor...especially when I work with clients that identify as gay or bi or lesbian.*

### Summary

The results of this qualitative study illustrate the process by which heterosexual counselors conceptualize their own heterosexual identity and its influences on the counseling process. The findings in this study are encouraging and provide promising implications that will enhance our understanding of the complex, multifaceted, and inimitable process of conceptualizing heterosexual orientation and how that process

influences counselors work with clients of various sexual statuses. The results of this study suggest that many heterosexual counselors have not had the opportunity to conceptualize their sexual orientation identity and reflect upon their attitudes, beliefs, and values concerning their heterosexual orientation. However, given the opportunity to engage in purposeful self-reflective activities, participants reported increased self-awareness and positive changes in attitudes regarding sexual orientation and sexual orientation identity. It is noteworthy that participants especially underscored the importance of self-reflection in relation to their heterosexual identity, related beliefs, and attitudes toward heterosexual and non-heterosexual clients.

Some participants were additionally able to identify a strong positive relationship between adopting a more cognitively complex paradigm concerning sexual orientation and counselor effectiveness. Although it can not be stated with any statistical certainty that these positive changes are directly linked to counselor effectiveness, it is noteworthy that all of the participants reported increased insight and self-awareness. As multicultural competence is founded upon increased awareness of one's self, such findings are a very unambiguous movement towards increased multicultural competence, which has been linked to counselor effectiveness. Such findings have considerable implications for counselor preparation and future research. These implications will be discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter Five

### DISCUSSION

In the following section, a detailed discussion of theory development, methodological limitations, and implications for counselor training and future research are presented. This project was framed by two interconnected, yet separate research questions which will guide this discussion:

1. How do dominant sexual identity group members (heterosexual counselors) conceptualize their sexual identity development?
2. How does counselors' sexual identity development influence the counseling process?

#### Cross-Analysis and Theory Development

The results of this qualitative research project indicated that how heterosexual counselors conceptualize their heterosexuality and how that conceptualization influences the counseling process were interconnected and related to a number of individual and contextual factors. While the complexity of participants' heterosexual conceptualization is evident in the results of this study, the impact of heterosexual identity development on the counseling process was also apparent. Thus, close observation and cross-analysis of domains regarding heterosexual identity development were arranged in a meaningful way and debated to consensus to propose a cyclical, developmental, permeable, and multidimensional model of Conceptualized Heterosexuality (see Figure 1) which offers significant implications for understanding heterosexual identity. It is important to note that the following model is a theoretical model of the conceptualization process of self-identified heterosexuals as opposed to a model of heterosexual identity development as



presented in the review of literature. This means that while findings of this proposed model of conceptualized heterosexuality may prove to be significant in understanding how individuals move through developmental processes to arrive at an endorsed heterosexual identity, this model more accurately describes the cognitive processes that qualify conceptualizing one's sexual orientation and sexual orientation identity and illustrate the intersection of multiple cultural identities at various points. Moreover, this model captures a more subjective perspective of sexual identity development. This semantic distinction is important because it proposes that recognition, acknowledgment, acceptance, and identification with one's sexual orientation are collectively components of heterosexual identity development, whereas the scope of this study offers a depiction of how one perceives and assigns value to individual subjective experiences related to sexual orientation and sexual orientation identity and how those experiences combine and organize a conceptual picture of a single phenomenon. Additionally, this model proposes that proposed models of HID (Worthington et al., 2002; Mohr, 2002; Sullivan, 1998) capture a single component of conceptualized heterosexuality, as opposed to a depiction of an entire process of development.

### Conceptualized Heterosexual Identity

The foremost construct under investigation in this study was heterosexual identity development (HID). The corresponding research questions sought to investigate HID, however; cross-analysis of data and results suggest that HID, initially presumed to be a primary development process for heterosexuals, and should more accurately be categorized as a single component of a broader cognitive conceptualization process (see Figure 1).

Collectively, the results of this study indicate that how heterosexual counselors conceptualize their heterosexuality is multifarious, complex, and allied to a number of individual and contextual factors and variables. The involvedness of participant's conceptualization is suggested in the results, in which 6 of the ten domains were described as significant development milestones prior to heterosexual identity developmental processes beginning, accounting for the various biosociocultural influences suggested in proposed models of HID (Mohr, 2002; Worthington et al., 2002). Each domain can be characterized into five developmental dimensions: *inherent orientation responses, pre-conceptualized heterosexuality, heterosexual identity development, and identification*. Each of these dimensions contains explicit developmental characteristics and behaviors (see Figure 1) that interact synergistically.

#### Inherent Orientation-Related Behavior

Inherent orientation was one general category experienced and endorsed by all participants. Each participant described recognition and response to biological antecedents and inherent sexuality-related impulses as consciousness emerged in late childhood and early adolescence. The implications for such findings are considerable. The discussion of inherent sexual orientation is often a subject of contention and disputation in earlier theories of sexual identity formation (Garnets, 2002). To date, researchers who have sought to answer or address the question pertaining to inherent sexual orientation have been unable to offer any conclusive empirical evidence either substantiating or disputing the influence of biological antecedents. However, findings of this study suggest that individuals experience responses to sexual orientation-related impulses in late childhood and early adolescence prior to emergence of social

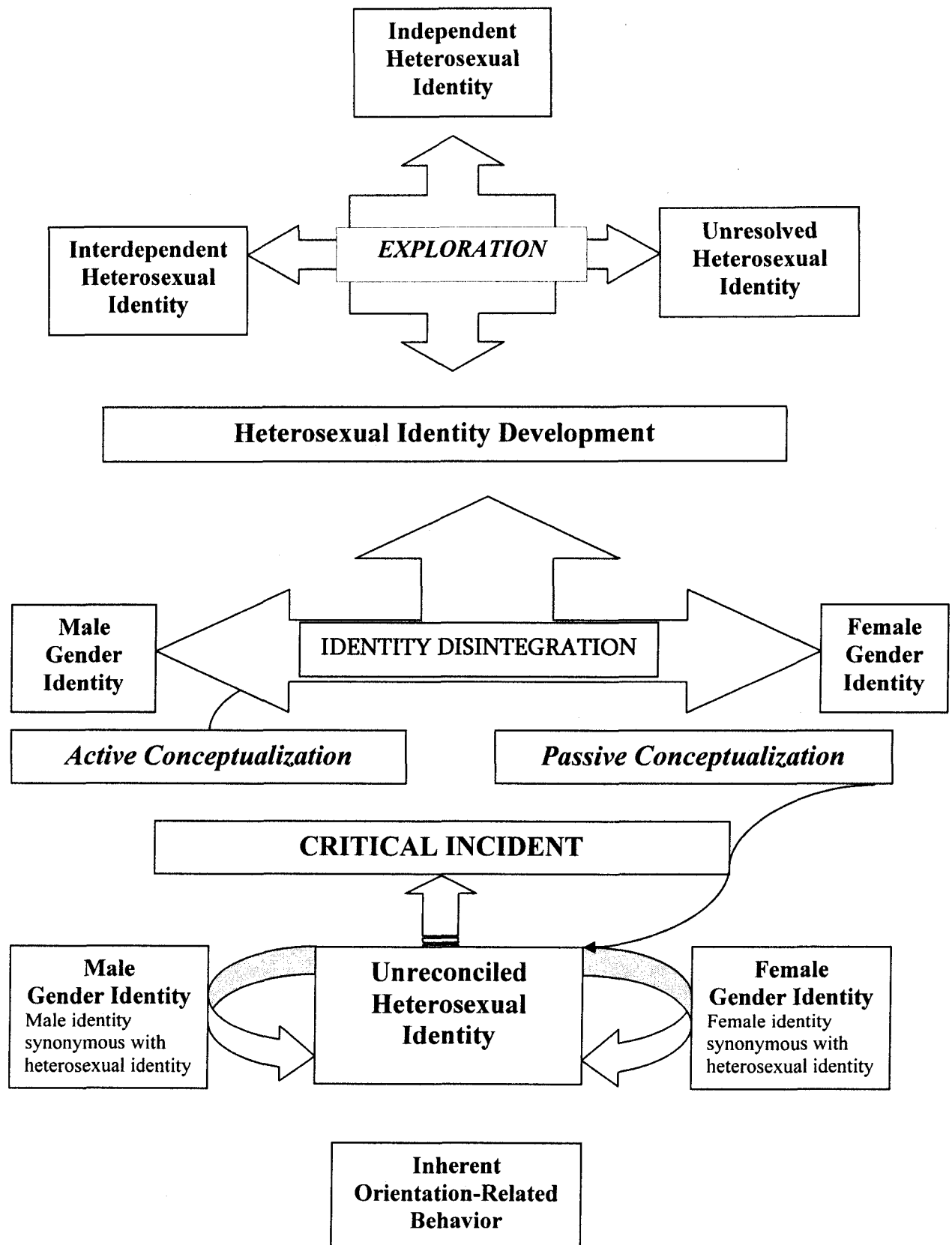
consciousness. These findings corroborate Worthington et al.'s (2002) distinction between *sexual orientation* (one's sexuality-related predispositions) and *sexual orientation identity* (one's conscious identification with one's sexual predispositions). Participants' advise that pre-conscious sexual orientation behavior was present prior to a conscious awareness of sexual orientation identity.

These findings should be considered in light of research in the area of GLB education. Many participants reported that having unresolved issues concerning the timeless "nature-versus-nurture" debate regarding non-heterosexual orientation. It is significant to note that these experiences were endorsed by the entire sample population in this study. This suggests that orientation responses or sexuality-related behavior may be inherent. Thus, this domain was placed independently from the progressive model of conceptualized heterosexuality. This was an important aspect in understanding sexuality as it suggests that an individual's sexual orientation identity may or may not be consistent with his or her inherent sexual orientation.

#### Pre-Conceptualized Heterosexuality

This dimension includes several pivotal developmental characteristics conceptualized by participants in this study, which include: *unreconciled heterosexuality*, *critical incident*, *active or passive conceptualization*, and *identity disintegration*. These dimensions were noted to have occurred prior to heterosexual identity development processes.

**Figure 1: Conceptualized Heterosexuality**



### *Unreconciled Heterosexuality*

Worthington et al. (2002) hypothesized that most self-identified heterosexuals were likely to experience very little conscious thought about ascribing to a heterosexual identity. Findings in this study suggest that because heterosexuality is a culturally prescribed norm in Western culture that is greatly endorsed within most American cultural groups, an unreconciled heterosexual identity was the starting point for most individuals. Aspects of sexual identity formation within this dimension reflect a range of sociocultural (e.g., familial, societal, cultural, spiritual) influences that construct an individuals' value system. Similar to Mohr's (2002) first working model, *democratic heterosexuality*, characteristics of this dimension include individuals who have not seriously considered their identity as heterosexual persons. This dimension includes minimal reflection of heterosexual privilege and oppression. Worthington et al. (2002) discussed a similar stage in their proposed model of HID called, "*unexplored commitment*." Thus, it is vital to demarcate differences between these paradigms. While unexplored commitment suggests that an individual accepts and adopts the dominant sexual orientation imposed by sociocultural variables, unreconciled heterosexuality emphasizes that gender identity formation was reported to be the salient sociocultural variable influencing sexual identity formation, while other influences (i.e., spiritual values) were significant, but of less importance in early identity development. In this dimension, gender identity development is almost completely undistinguishable from heterosexuality during initial phases of pre-conceptualized heterosexuality. Additionally, participants experiencing components of this dimension strongly ascribe to gender identity roles and tend to operate within culturally prescribed norms dictating

heterosexual male and female specific behavior. Participant reflections suggest that gender roles were pervasive in their sexual identity formation. The dichotomization of gender roles into two distinct categories (male and female) regarding specific gender-related behaviors was the central focus of this dimension. For female participants, gender socialization suggested that seeking an opposite sex partner with whom one can procreate and unite in marriage was considered normal behavioral. This normal behavior was validated and affirmed in early play experiences. For example, one female participant stated:

My mom loved it when we would play house. I'd be like the mom and my cousin or neighbor or friend...or whoever would be the dad. And we would like have babies and I would cook dinner and clean the house and he would go to work and do dad stuff. It was funny now that I think about it...but my parents really got into the fact that we played in that way. My mom always bought me and my sister toys that were like kitchen supplies or cleaning or cooking supplies. And it was funny too cause my sister was so not into that...and it used to piss my mom off. She was way more into boy stuff like sports stuff.

This example is also a powerful depiction of the subtle gender roles imposed on males. Male participants report gender roles messages imply that masculinity and manhood can be and "should be" expressed through physical aggression (i.e., toughness, athleticism), restriction and suppression of emotions, and avoidance of characteristics stereotypically associated with gay male identity. Thus, many male participants default to heterosexual identity, regardless of inherent orientation congruence, to avoid being perceived as gay or feminine- which is oftentimes used synonymously in male participant

language. These gender standards ultimately shaped and confined participant's sexual identity formation and resulted in conformity of both gender and sexuality-related norms.

For many participants', gender and sexuality were intertwined with religious orientation-related factors. Worthington et al. (2002) assert that virtually every religious affiliation attempts to dictate, regulate, and define sexual behavior and moral sexuality through theological teachings. This proved to be of particular relevance to some participants.

Such findings suggest that heterosexuality is influenced by the particular values, needs, or beliefs espoused by many sociocultural factors; however, gender identity and religious orientation proved to be the most germane to participants in this study.

#### *Critical Incident & Conceptualization Processes*

This domain is a pivotal dimension within this model because it captures participants' movement from an Unreconciled Heterosexuality, that is mostly reliant upon culturally prescribed normative sexual behavior, to a place of dissonance, which relies on critical analysis, cognitive complexity, and a self-authorized value system. The critical incident domain was the second *general* category that all participants endorsed. Participants reported wide-ranging experiences in this category that the research team deemed to be a subjective critical incident experienced by the participant that led to a conceptualization process. This conceptualization process varied in intentionality and regard. Thus, some participants actively moved towards a higher conceptual understanding of heterosexuality (active conceptualization), while others digressed back to an Unreconciled Heterosexual identity (passive conceptualization). Prior to experiencing a critical incident, individuals within this domain tended to reduce sexual

orientation to oversimplified bipolar dichotomies-people are either heterosexual or homosexual. Participants engaging in a passive conceptualization maintained this paradigm, while individuals engaged in active conceptualization developed a more versatile and complex understanding of heterosexuality. Similarly, individuals reporting active conceptualization also developed a more sophisticated and relativistic understanding of non-heterosexual statuses as their understanding of self evolves.

Purposeful exploration and evaluation of one's own sexual preferences, needs, and values are typical behaviors within the active conceptualization domain. This domain was reported to be an exclusively cognitive process. Individuals within this domain were not interested in experimentation with other persons or exploration of modes of sexual pleasure or expression. Furthermore, while this process is purposeful, it is not specifically goal-directed. Participants did not express a desire to move towards any ideal status. Participants in this domain solely express interest in exploring feelings of dissonance. Some participants identified and shared experiences that included, exposure to GLB identity, pregnancy, loss of a relationship, and lecture or presentation on sexuality theory in counselor training. For instance, a female participant stated:

It wasn't until I learned about umm, Kinsey Scale? You know, where there is like a range of sexual orientation. One of the students in our class did a presentation on it and it was incredibly interesting. We had this big discussion after class. That just blew my mind...I had never thought about it like that. It just made me think, of like my own sexuality and...I don't know. It just helped me to really feel comfortable enough to explore and think about how I felt about sexuality. I don't



it just changed my perspective on what I thought it meant to be heterosexual...and what it meant to be gay.

Other participants reported similar epiphanies in multicultural counseling and human development courses. This suggests that exposing students to information concerning heterosexual developmental processes is advantageous in nurturing and cultivating a less dualistic perspective on human sexuality and orientation. Comparable implications were suggested in several writings (see Marcia, 1987; Worthington et al., 2002) regarding heterosexuality. Oftentimes referred to as *diffusion*, Marcia (1987) and Worthington et al. (2002) describe similar experiences as the absence of exploration or commitment which oftentimes results from crisis. The key characteristic of this identity status is intentionality and goal direction, similar to critical incident. Thus, it is important to illuminate the difference between *diffusion* and *critical incident*. In this study, participants reported that incidents that were not articulated as a crisis (i.e., exposure to GLB orientation, increased education on sexuality theory, first sexual interactions) were just as germane in their developmental process and led to conceptualization.

A significant theme was the variance between what constituted a crisis per each participant. Thus, the research team believed that naming this domain *critical incident* most adequately captured and articulated this variance among participants' subjective experiences.

### *Identity Disintegration*

Active conceptualization also proved to be the vessel by which the separation of gender identity and heterosexuality occurred. As an individuals' understanding of their heterosexuality shifted from a dualistic paradigm to a more integrated and complex

understanding, participants reported that they began to understand the differences between their gender and heterosexuality. In this dimension, individuals began to isolate and examine circumscribed gender roles and consider the implications of how those gender-related suppositions have inadvertently constructed their sexual orientation identity. Thus, when these identities are detached and one is able to explore heterosexuality as a sole identity, individuals move toward a process of heterosexual identity development.

### Heterosexual Identity Development

The findings of this study suggest that heterosexual identity development is a single component of conceptualized heterosexual identity, which is in contrast to more recent models of heterosexual identity development (see Eliason, 1995; Marcia, 1987; Mohr, 2002; Sullivan, 1998; Worthington et al., 2002). Recent models of heterosexual identity development provide micro-articulation of the developmental processes of heterosexuality, whereas the scope of this research project offers a macro-articulation of these developmental processes. Thus, results of this study suggest that heterosexual identity development may prove to be one of many significant components of conceptualized heterosexual identity. By qualitatively exploring this construct, results suggest that a number of conceptual milestones must be achieved prior to engaging upon a process of heterosexual identity development. Such findings offer breadth to our understanding of heterosexuality,

Results suggest that the process of heterosexual identity development is initiated by an explorative trajectory of one's own sexuality-related preferences, behaviors, values, modes of expression, and preferences in opposite sex partners, after one has moved past a

pre-conceptualized heterosexual orientation. Consequently, active conceptualization is the vehicle by which one begins to conceptualize the process of HID.

Collectively, results of this study suggest that the primary characteristic of this stage is exploration. Similar to the propositions of most HID research (Eliason, 1995; Marcia, 1987; Mohr, 2002; Sullivan, 1998; Worthington et al., 2002), HID exploration consistently suggested both cognitive and behavioral modes of investigation. Cognitive exploration is viewed as the “safest” mode of exploration by many individuals, as it maintains the integrity of many individual cultural values, oftentimes adopted by one’s religious affiliation. Cognitive exploration activities are predominantly abstinence-oriented and may include activities such as reading books about sex, viewing sexually explicit images that challenge dichotomous notions of sexuality, or freely engaging in self-gratifying sexual activities while openly exploring sexual fantasies. The chief component of cognitive exploration is that it’s solitary discourse. However, individuals engaging in behavioral exploration experiment with different types of sexual activities that generally involve other partners. For some, behavioral exploration may include romantic and sexual relationships with people having characteristics that reject one’s circumscribed notions of acceptable sexual partners. For instance, an individual may have a romantic relationship with a partner of a different race, gender, social class, religious affiliation, etc. Behavioral explorative activities also include adoption of gender atypical behaviors (e.g., sex with multiple partners, reverse in masculine and feminine sexuality-related behaviors). Despite one’s decision to cognitively or behaviorally explore their sexual orientation, the purpose of exploration in HID is to engage in a self-directed process of rejecting circumscribed sociocultural influences with the goal of constructing a

self-constructed heterosexual identity. The intention of this process is to adopt a personal sexual value system that addresses one's sexual needs, preferred sexual activities, preferred characteristics of sexual partners, meanings of sexual fantasies, and recognition of sexual orientation. It is important to note that HID does not necessarily lead to identification with one's sexual orientation, however, the process of HID does lead to a heterosexual orientation identity. This identity may or may not be congruent with one's sexual orientation.

### Identification

Heterosexual orientation identification is relatively neglected in current models of HID. While recent models identify statuses, stages, phases, and working models of heterosexuality, these models fail to articulate and expound upon the culminating event of explorative processes- ultimately identifying as heterosexual. However, achieving a self-constructed heterosexual orientation identity is the goal of HID. In this dimension, individuals speculate that their sexual orientation is heterosexual, however; are willing to explore the nature of their heterosexual feelings. Thus, results of this study indicate that exploration of heterosexuality may lead to 1 of 3 identified heterosexual identities: (1) Interdependent Heterosexual Identity, (2) Independent Heterosexual Identity, and (3) Unresolved Heterosexual Identity.

#### *Interdependent Heterosexual Identity*

For individuals in this study, individual identity development is a convergent and synergistic process of developing multiple aspects of one's identity simultaneously (i.e., spiritual identity, gender identity, social identity, racial/ethnic identity). However, for some individuals explorative processes are thwarted by an aspect of one's identity that

takes priority over others. Findings of this study suggest that some participants, while engaging in explorative processes, resolve that one's spiritual identity is an inimitable and uncompromisable component of their collective identity. This suggests that spiritual identity development is often the foundation by which one chooses to define all supplementary aspects of their individual identity. For example, a number of participants in this study branded their Christian values as the dominant force governing the extent to which they were willing to explore their sexuality. Similarly, in many cases religious values also dictate values and beliefs concerning gender identity. Thus, interdependent heterosexuals contend that identity exploration of any kind must be within the context of their spiritual and religious values. While interdependent heterosexuals may be willing to adopt a more comprehensive and cognitively complex definition of heterosexuality, their heterosexual value system is explored, defined, and articulated within the context of a prevailing identity. Theoretically, such constraints would be debilitating and limit one's ability to explore sexual orientation uninhibitedly, however, it is essential to remember the goal of exploration in heterosexual identity development-to accomplish a self-constructed heterosexual identity. Thus, interdependent heterosexuality may be an achieved and self-authorized identity for heterosexual individuals.

#### *Independent Heterosexual Identity*

This heterosexual identity closely resembles Worthington et al.'s (2002) *synthesis* status. Presumably the most sophisticated identity, independent heterosexuality is achieved via uninhibited cognitive and behavioral exploration leading to a construction of heterosexuality that encompasses one's own sexual value system and translates into positive and non-judgmental attitude toward other persons, regardless of sexual

orientation. The sexual value system of independently identified heterosexuals is inclusive, comprehensive, and dependent from other aspects of one's identity. Developed solely based on one's sexual orientation, independent heterosexuality does not comprise the integrity of any other aspect of one's identity. Consequently, the results of this study suggest that independent heterosexuality was most closely related to professional identity congruence (*the acknowledgement that a comprehensive understanding of sexuality was related to higher levels of counselor effectiveness*).

#### *Unresolved Heterosexual Identity*

The following identification is presented to capture the experience of heterosexual individuals that embark upon cognitive and behavioral exploration and discover that their sexuality may be more closely related to a bisexual orientation, however; for various reasons continue to self-identify as heterosexual. The results of this study found that some individuals discovered that while they have sexual feelings and attractions towards the same sex, their relational preferences were opposite sex. Such findings are not included in recent HID literature, however; offer a more intricate perspective of heterosexual identity and sexual orientation identity.

#### Conceptualized Heterosexuality and the Counseling Process

Examination of data regarding HID and the counseling process revealed seven domains: *unawareness, assumed heterosexuality, dissonance, increased insight, minority focus, ambivalence, and professional identity congruence* (see Table 3). *Unawareness* was the first general category. When asked to reflect upon and describe how heterosexuality influences or affects the counseling process, all participants initially reported they had never thought about how their heterosexual identity affects and/or influences counseling

process. Thus, this domain was categorized as *general* as evidenced by full endorsement of the entire sample population. This may suggest that participants in this study have never had the opportunity to conceptualize how their heterosexual identity influences their work with clients. The other general category endorsed by all participants was the *increased insight* domain. Perhaps one of the most promising results, revealed within this domain was that all participants reported that through examination of their heterosexuality, they realized the need to reevaluate how heterosexual identity development interacts with the counseling process with both heterosexual and non-heterosexual clients. The domain was categorized as *general* and endorsed by the entire sample population. Participants reported this increased insight in various ways which included multicultural counseling education coursework on sexual orientation, early exposure to minority sexuality, and subjective experiences in counseling concerning work with GLB clients in counseling. Some participants reported increased self-awareness as a result of participation in this study, while others reported that participating in this study has led them to reconceptualize how their heterosexuality influences the counseling process and relationship.

When asked to initially discuss how their heterosexuality influences the counseling process, many participants believed that their heterosexuality was germane when: (1) there is a potential for sexual attraction between the counselor and an opposite-sex client [*Eros Interplay*], or (2) when a client's sexual orientation was GLB and counselor was heterosexual [*Minority Focus*]. These findings may suggest that some counselors are aware of that their heterosexual identity may, in fact, affect the counseling process, but counselors are unable to explicitly articulate how it affects the counseling

process. This may be a result of participants reporting unawareness and limited opportunities to conceptualize their heterosexual identity professionally.

Professional Identity Congruence was a variant category, only endorsed by 1 participant; however, that participant also was the only participant that had an Independent Heterosexual Identity. This may suggest that counselors that have a heterosexual identity that is independent of other cultural identity variables and are able to adopt a more complex and multidimensional perspective of sexuality, are able to more clearly conceptualize how the counseling process is influenced by one's conceptualization of heterosexuality. However, considering that this category was endorsed by 1 participant, such implications are considerably speculative.

#### Implications for Counselor Preparation and Future Research

Current literature concerning HID is founded on existing literature on minority/majority identity development and lacks available empirical evidence to support speculative claims. Thus, the findings of this study and corresponding proposed model of conceptualized heterosexuality offer a more efficacious or empirically based conceptualization of counselor's heterosexual identity. However, it is important to outline the results of this study within the framework of the design. The findings of this study offer an in-depth and thick description of the experiences of a small sample size, thus, the scope of implications must be considered within the context of a qualitative design. Nonetheless, the results of this study offer a sufficient empirical foundation for counselor preparation and future research.



*Implications for Counselor Training*

Oftentimes, beneath the surface of homophobia and heterosexism, is fear and ignorance. Many counselors have been taught to address these feelings and attitudes by learning about culturally different individuals, while having limited or no opportunity to reflect upon their own cultural identities. This was particularly true for heterosexually identified counselors in this study who overwhelmingly reported that they had never reflected upon their heterosexual identity and its influences on the counseling process. Thus, it may be beneficial to develop and implement initiatives to increase awareness, change attitudes, and enhance knowledge and skill among heterosexual individuals. Findings of this study are promising and provide some insight as to how to prepare counselor trainees to recognize and acknowledge their own cultural diversity in the counseling relationship and address biases concerning sexuality that may be harmful to potential clients. Worthington et al. (2002) hypothesize that a greater understanding of heterosexuality may reduce the tendency for counselor trainees to dichotomize sexual orientation. This paradigm shift could ultimately lead to “increased understanding of and comfort with sexuality-related issues that client may bring to counseling, as well as facilitate the understanding of issues related to ordinate-subordinate group dynamics (p.524)”. One of the more noteworthy findings of this study suggest that reflection of one’s heterosexual identity resulted in increased insight and adoption of a more complex and multidimensional understanding of heterosexuality and sexual orientation. However, while all participants endorsed this domain, increased insights for participants did not automatically lead to counselors being able to translate this cognitive change in their personal value systems into counseling-related behavior. Few participants were able to

articulate the impact of increased insight on the counseling process. Most participants believed that their heterosexuality only affected the counseling process when the potential for sexual attraction was possible. Such findings provide guidance for counselor educators. For heterosexually identified counselor trainees, examination of their heterosexual orientation identity could be the first step towards reducing heterosexism and developing GLB affirming attitudes in counseling. Counselor trainees may benefit from having the opportunity to construct positive attitudes concerning the sexuality of others upon a positive conceptualized understanding of self. Results of this study may also suggest that affirmative environments and programs that encourage self-exploration for heterosexual trainees may provide opportunities for critical incidents to occur (i.e., direct contact with GLB identified individuals, introduction to heterosexuality-related research), and combat stereotypes about the GLB community. Such activities may be useful in increasing GLB affirming attitudes and reducing trainees tendency to dichotomize sexual orientation. It may additionally foster increased comfort with and understanding of sexuality and sexual identity related issues presented in counseling.

However, taking the next step to initiate a program or address heterosexual exploration in counselor training programs may be a challenge for counseling faculty. Similar to counseling trainees, the proposed model and implications may prove to be of benefit to faculty members and supervisors. Similar to counseling trainees, heterosexually identified faculty are encouraged to engage in a process of self-exploration as a means of increasing their effectiveness as a supervisor to GLB students and facilitating a culturally-affirming and GLB friendly training atmosphere.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the counselor educator and supervisor to offer students opportunities to translate increased awareness of self and sexuality into best practice behaviors in counseling. Counseling faculty members should not automatically assume that because students demonstrate a decrease in heterosexist views and beliefs and an increase in GLB affirming attitudes, they will be able convert such paradigm shifts into effective counseling techniques, skills, and practice. Thus, counselor educators can assist in this process by integrating discussion of attitude transference in various aspects of their curriculum. For instance, faculty may offer case vignettes of heterosexual and non-heterosexual clients of various genders and cultural backgrounds and invite students to participant in a discussion of how the counseling process and relationship is influenced by the orientation of the counselor. Activities that offer counseling trainees opportunities to reflect upon their own sexuality and its influences on the counseling process may help clients to eliminate notions of normative sexual orientation which may result in increased self-awareness and greater preparedness to work with clients of diverse cultural backgrounds.

### *Implications for Research*

Implications suggested are based on review of multicultural and sexual identity formation literature, and observations of a small number of participants within a setting. Research, particularly further qualitative inquiry, is needed to further support the model or suggest modifications. Future research endeavors should include the design of statistical instruments that will measure key constructs presented in the proposed model of conceptualized heterosexuality. Designing quantitative instruments that measure heterosexual attitudes, recognition of membership in privileged, oppressive majority

group behaviors and heterosexist behavior would be advantageous in providing a more valid correlation between heterosexual attitudes and GLB affirmativeness. Additionally, future research activities may focus on furthering outcome based counseling interventions targeting minority and majority sexual identity development, high-risk sexual behavior, homonegativity, and heterosexism. Lastly, the proposed model must be tested with respect to implications concerning counselor effectiveness. Such studies could be aimed at offering statistical validity to speculative correlations between heterosexual identifications and counselor effectiveness. While results of this research show potential and offer an expanded perspective of heterosexuality, it is merely a basis from which a wide-ranging body of research can ultimately be produced.

#### LIMITATIONS

CQR designs, in general, share some common limitations. The most obvious being the small sample size utilized (Hill et al., 2005). In this study, 10 participants were interviewed. This limitation was addressed by continuous member checking and cross-analysis. Research team members analyzed and interpreted the initial data. As a result of no new themes emerging from the data, it was not necessary for the participant sample size to increase, as saturation was achieved within 10 participant data sets.

Additionally, potential researcher bias is a general limitation of this study. This issue was addressed by utilizing two teams of a total of seven researchers and a qualified auditor with varying demographics in the areas of ethnicity, gender, varying levels of counseling experience, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, prior to the collection of data, the research team met and discussed biases and expectations of the interview protocol. Each researcher was given the opportunity to answer a set of open-ended

reflective questions to assist them in exploring and discussing their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings regarding this phenomenon and the design of the study. Addressing researcher bias was an on-going and continuous task in the consensus process. All team members were encouraged to be aware of each others biases and assumptions and agree to point them out in a respectful manner during the course of this discussion and throughout the process of reaching consensus. The explicit awareness of each member's unique perspective allowed the team to monitor bias through the coding process, selection of core domains, and development of proposed model. The author included a detailed description of each member's biases and expectations in the study. However, despite efforts to address this issue, the author was aware that it is was still likely that some findings were simply the result of the way in which the study was organized around the phenomenon, how interview questions were conceptualized and designed, the personal style of the interviewer and the prompts used, and ultimately, the lenses through which the data were interpreted.

It is also important to note that while research team members met face-to-face for several consensus meetings, some codes and domains were argued to consensus via electronic communication (e.g., telephone, email, and teleconference). While research team members were able to arrive at consensus regarding data, it is important to note that face-to-face communication may provide optimal conditions for facilitating consensus in CQR methodology (Hill et al., 1997, Hill et al., 2005).

Demographical characteristics of the participants were additionally a limitation. Participants were pulled from very specific regions of Virginia. These geographical limitations may suggest a limited understanding of this phenomenon as it pertains to

cultural variables. Participant's age also ranged from the age of twenty-two to thirty-six, limiting the implications for lifespan development and maturation. Additionally, Caucasian and African American participants were the only ethnic/racial groups captured in this study. Including other ethnic minority groups may have yielded different results. Moreover, a majority of participants currently work in a college counseling setting, which may limit the implications and findings of this project.

Furthermore, the nature of this design was collaborative, in that it examined the intersection of two phenomenon- HID and the influences of HID on the counseling process. Thus, a study of either phenomenon as a sole entity may yield a richer depiction of both the participants' experiences and each phenomenon.

An additional limitation of this project was that the primary investigator was the sole interviewer. This was advantageous in establishing prolonged engagement and convenient sampling; however, utilizing a variety of interviewers to conduct interviews may have yielded different data.

Furthermore, the sampling method may have produced a biased sample. Simply agreeing to participate in the study suggests some bias regarding motivation for participation. Examining only the informants who agreed to participate does not account for the experiences of other counselors that chose not to participate and motivations for non-participation. Data collected from this group may have yielded different findings.

Lastly, the design of this project does not yield a statistically significant understanding of the phenomenon, limiting the generalizability of this study.

## CONCLUSION

The proposed model and its implications regarding the counseling process simply provide a framework that challenges oversimplified notions of sexual orientation by offering a conceptualized perspective of majority group membership. This model offers a conceptualized illustration of heterosexually identified counselors and illuminates the need for counselor preparation to train culturally contentious counselors who construct positive attitudes towards culturally different persons upon an awareness of one's own cultural identity. By doing so, counselor educators help to develop counselors who are able to be role models, social advocates, and change agents for clients and in the world in which we live. Such counselors could be a catalyst for positive social change and help to create a world in which all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, are valued for who they are and not defined by rigid labels.

Chapter 6

PUBLICATION MANUSCRIPT

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Running head: TEACHING WITHIN THE BOX

Teaching within the Box:

Exploring Conceptualized Heterosexuality in Counselor Preparation

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## Abstract

With CACREP's increasing attention to majority cultural group memberships and its influence on trainee self-awareness and the counseling relationship (see CACREP 2001/2009), heterosexually-identified counselors have little or no opportunity to increase awareness of their own sexuality, creating challenges when working with clients of various sexual identities. The purpose of this article is to present a qualitative analysis and proposed model of the process by which heterosexually-identified counselors conceptualize their heterosexual identity. The authors further present strategies for addressing conceptualized heterosexual identity in counselor preparation. Implications for future research are also discussed.

## Teaching Within the Box: Exploring Conceptualized Heterosexuality in Counselor Preparation

Counseling programs are tasked with promoting multicultural proficiency whereby counselor trainees are able to acknowledge cultural diversity in the counseling relationship and address biases that may be harmful to potential clients. Historically, programs have focused on developing trainees' competencies by attending to the awareness, knowledge and skill dimensions of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies and Standards (MCC; see Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). With this focus, trainees become more adept for working with racial and ethnic minorities and minorities' intersecting identities. Of these dimensions counselor self-awareness has been noted as the building block of MCC and thus highly valued in counselor preparation (Brinson, 1996). While counselor self-awareness encompasses gaining insight into a range of cultural identities, MCC literature over the past few decades indicates counselor preparation programs tend to focus on learning about "culturally different" clients or minority cultural groups, those perceived to be "outside of the box", or deviating from the norm. Even with increased attention to majority cultural groups and the interface of power and privilege issues (e.g., Croteau, Talbot, Lance, & Evans, 2002; Hays, Chang, & Dean, 2004; Hays, Dean, & Chang, 2007; Schlosser, 2001), literature on sexual orientation and the counseling process- specifically attention to majority sexual identities- is minimal.

CACREP Standards (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2001/2009) include sexual orientation as one of the areas of cultural diversity that counselor training programs need to address in counselor

preparation. These standards specify sexual orientation as one of the areas of diversity that counselor training programs must address. In an attempt to comply with CACREP mandates and policies, counselor training programs offer opportunities for counselors trainees to explore sexual minority issues, while attending to the complexity of the developmental processes of heterosexually identified persons is often omitted. The purpose of this article, then, is to present findings of a qualitative inquiry investigating how heterosexually-identified counselors conceptualize their sexual identity and how conceptualized heterosexuality influences the counseling process. A proposed model of conceptualized heterosexuality will be presented and strategies for “teaching within in the box” in an effort to assist heterosexually-identified counselor trainees explore their sexual identity will also be suggested. The goal of such exploration is to enhance knowledge of sexual identity developmental processes in heterosexually identified persons, increase self-awareness of their own SID process, and augment skills for working with clients of various sexual identities. Implications for future research directions are also discussed.

### Review of Literature

It was not until recently that theorist again called attention to the developmental processes of heterosexually identified persons. Building upon the work of Eliason (1995) and Hardiman and Jackson’s racial identity development model (1992), Sullivan (1998) attempted to describe both LGB and heterosexual identity. In her model, all individuals move through five stages of increasing awareness and complexity regarding their sexual identity. In the first stage, *naïveté*, heterosexual individuals have little awareness of sexual orientation. The next stage, *acceptance*, can be either passive, with individuals more openly expressing and acting on negative opinions of homosexuality. Stage three,

*resistance*, can also be passive or active. Passive resistance is characterized by recognitions of heterosexism but also a belief that one can do nothing about it, while individuals in active resistance both acknowledge their own homophobic attitudes and confront those of others. The fourth stage, *redefinition*, involves establishment of a positive heterosexual identity defined by more than rejection of heterosexists beliefs. Individuals who are able to establish an identity independent of normative heterosexual definitions achieve the final stage of development, *internalization*.

Recently, scholars (Mohr, 2002; Worthington & Mohr, 2002; Worthington et al., 2002) have conceptualized heterosexuality and heterosexual identity development (HID) using proponents from available sexuality theories (e.g., Kinsey et al., 1953; Klein, 1990) and traditional models of sexual identity development (e.g., Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Eliason, 1995; Marcia, 1987; Sullivan, 1998; Troiden, 1989). Worthington et al. (2002) and Mohr (2002) present two independent models of HID that additionally integrate theoretical models of majority group identity development (e.g., Helms, 1995) suggesting that HID processes parallel white identity development in some ways. That is, universal developmental statuses experienced by whites which include movement from a complete lack of awareness to full acknowledgement of bias and privilege (Simoni & Walters, 2001) may have similar implications in the explorations. Collectively, these models outline general HID processes, individual differences in HID, and implications of heterosexual identity for training, practice, and research in counseling and related fields. Both authors express unequivocal opposition to conversion or reparative therapy by explicitly stating that they are against their work being used for the advancement of such research.

Worthington et al.'s (2002) multidimensional model includes developmental statuses, similar to contemporary models of SID, but also conceptualizes biopsychosocial influences and dimensions of individual and social identity, oftentimes disregarded and overlooked in traditional models (Hoffman, 2004). They initially offered distinct definitions for *sexual orientation* (one's sexuality-related predispositions), *sexual orientation identity* (one's conscious identification with one's sexual predispositions), and *sexual identity* (one's recognition and acceptance of one's sexual orientation). This semantic delineation of terminology is an imperative component of investigating and understanding constructs of SID, often overlooked in contemporary models of SID, implying that sexual orientation and sexual identity are one in the same and can be used synonymously in literature. Although most traditional models of SID claim to investigate sexual identity development, according to Worthington et al.'s (2002) definitions, earlier models of SID investigate sexual orientation identity more than SID, which is a larger process that includes sexual orientation identity (Hoffman, 2004).

The proposed process of individual HID includes six dimensions: (a) identification and awareness of an individual's sexual needs (one's sexual orientation is included in this category and may emerge within this dimension), (b) adoption of personal sexual value systems, (c) awareness of preferred modes of sexual activities and expression, (d) awareness of preferred characteristics of sexual partners, (e) awareness of preferred modes of sexual expression, and (f) recognition and identification with sexual orientation (i.e., sexual orientation identity). The six aforementioned dimensions explain key components of heterosexual *individual* identity development. These mechanisms synergistically evolve and interact with the process of heterosexual *social* identity

development, which includes two dimensions: (a) group membership identity and (b) attitudes toward members of sexual minority groups, (Worthington et al., 2002).

Worthington et al. (2002) further posited that HID can be characterized by a convergence of individual and social identity development processes within a biopsychosocial context (Hoffman, 2004). Worthington et al. (2002) discuss six biopsychosocial influences that affect SID: *biology* (inherent genetic and physiological antecedents and maturation); *microsocial context* (those individuals with who one has regular contact and receives messages regarding gender role conformity, sexual knowledge, attitudes, sexual values, and some sexual behaviors); *gender norms and socialization* (the assignment of one set of specific characteristics to a specific sex which is reinforced via social influences); *culture* (religious orientation, systemic homonegativity, sexual prejudice, and privilege). Worthington et al. (2002) theorized that the processes of individual and social identity development for heterosexuals occur within five identity development statuses which may occur on both conscious and unconscious levels throughout all proposed stages (see Table 1).

Mohr (2002) independently presented a model of sexual orientation identity that offered an agenda for examining the efficiency of heterosexual-identified therapists' work with GLB clients specifically. Mohr's (2002) model emphasizes his belief that biased practice displayed by heterosexual therapists can be conceptualized as a "manifestation of their efforts to process and respond to sexual issues in ways that foster a positive and coherent identity" (p. 533). As Worthington et al. (2002) discussed the interplay of social and individual identity; Mohr (2002) suggests the interplay of personal identity and public identity as supplementary components of heterosexual identity.

*Personal identity* is the internal experience and understanding of one's heterosexual orientation, whereas, *public identity* is the manner in which individual externally expresses and demonstrates their experience of heterosexuality (Hoffman, 2004). Mohr (2002) also offered a definition of heterosexual identity which is defined as a "product of the interplay between individuals' sexual orientation schemas and their motivation to fulfill basic needs for social acceptance and psychological consistency (p. 492)".

Mohr (2002) describes three primary components of heterosexual identity: (a) precursors of adult heterosexual identity, (b) determinants of adult heterosexual identity, and (c) determinants of adult heterosexual identity. He posits that there are two categories of precursors concerning adult heterosexual identity: (a) experiences with personal sexuality (which includes attractions, fantasies, and sex experiences) and (b) exposure to information about sexual orientation through the influence of media, peers, family, school, and church. These precursors contribute to Mohr's (2002) working models of sexual orientation. In Mohr's (2002) first working model, *democratic heterosexuality*, people have a tendency to have a monolithic perspective of sexuality, viewing all people as the same. These individual have not seriously considered their heterosexual identity or examined heterosexual privilege or oppression and the impact of such ideas on the lives of non-heterosexual persons. The second working model, *compulsory heterosexuality*, is based on the belief that heterosexuality is the only appropriate sexual orientation.

Negative attitudes about GLB persons and stereotyping are general characteristics of individuals in this model. In the third working model, *politicized heterosexuality*, individuals focus on privilege associated with heterosexuality, often experiencing feelings of guilt, anger, and self blame. In the final model, *integrative heterosexuality*,



heterosexual individuals are aware that people of all sexual orientations are influenced by an oppressive system of which they are a part and realize that they are accorded privileges that GLB persons do not have.

The models of Mohr (2002) and Worthington et al. (2002) have yet to be empirically tested. Thus, implications of these models are tentative. Thus, the following study seeks to address this limitation in proposed models of heterosexual identity development by examining how counselors conceptualize their heterosexuality. The purpose of this qualitative analysis is to present findings as a way of uncovering the essential aspects of the process of training multiculturally-competent heterosexual counselors and improving counselor preparation.

#### Method

Using a consensual qualitative research tradition (Patton, 2003), the present study investigated the phenomenon of heterosexual identity development's (HID) influence on the counseling process and the meanings behind the development of heterosexually identified counselors. The essential components of CQR are the use of (a) open-ended questions in semi structured interviews, which allows for the collection of consistent data across individuals as well as a more in-depth examination of individual experiences; (b) several judges throughout the data collection process to foster multiple perspectives; (c) consensus to arrive at interpretations of the data; (d) at least one auditor to check the work of the primary team and judges and minimize researcher bias; and (e) domains, core ideas, and cross analyses in the data analysis (Patton, 2003). CQR is an appropriate strategy for attending to the voices of the participants with respect to their thoughts,

beliefs, values, and experiences of the participant's as it relates to their sexual identity development.

### *Research Team*

To minimize researcher bias, the research teams varied in ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and sexuality-related assumptions. The diversity of the research team minimized the impact of researcher bias on data interpretation and provided a range of perspectives for consensus of the data interpretation process, which is an integral element of the CQR method (Patton, 2003).

The primary researcher is an African American, female, currently in a heterosexual marriage. The primary investigator was responsible for overseeing all aspects of the study, including development of research questions, structuring the research team, selecting the target population, recruiting participants, designing an interview protocol based on literature, collecting data, and functioning as a part of both research teams.

Two primary research teams, or rotating primary research teams (Hill et al., 2005), were utilized in this study. Research team members were not involved with participant interviewing or data transcription. The primary researcher/ primary investigator was a member of each research team.

### *Assumptions and Biases of Primary Researcher & Research Team Members*

CQR design suggests that researchers report both expectations and biases so that readers can evaluate the findings with this knowledge in mind (Hill et al., 2005). Therefore, prior to beginning the research study, the research team had an in-depth

discussion of researcher biases, assumptions, and expectations. The primary investigator facilitated this discussion.

Research team members expressed a range of biases. All research team members reported beliefs that sexuality existed on a continuum and was a result of biological, social, cultural, and spiritual factors. Research team members resolved discrepancies between perspectives by agreeing that research team members further illuminate the biases shared between research team members as data was analyzed and coded to minimize researcher bias.

### *Participants*

Participants were recruited via purposeful sampling and prolonged engagement. Of the 16 participants, 10 participants ( $n=10$ ) were selected for participation based on established participant selection criterion and maximum variation. Maximum variation was established by widely diversifying participant demographics. Required participant criterion included: self-identified heterosexual counselors and counselor trainees. Data was collected from 2 semi-structured interviews and 1 meaning-making reflective essay from 10 participants (6 females and 4 males). Regarding racial background, 6 participants identified as White/Caucasian-American, 3 participants identified as African-American, and 1 participant identified as both White American and African-American.

## RESULTS

Domains were separated into two categories consistent with the research questions: Heterosexual Identity Development (HID) and HID and the Counseling Process. Frequency labels (general, typical, and variant; see Table 1) summarize the occurrence of the following themes among the participants' responses. According to

CQR (Hill et al., 2005), *general* refers to a category endorsed by all participants ( $n=10$ ), *typical* refers to a category endorsed by 5 to 9 participants, and *variant* refers to a category endorsed by 2 to 4 participants.

Table 1

*Heterosexual Identity Development Domains and Frequency Labels*

Heterosexual Identity Domains	General	Typical	Variant
Inherent Orientation-Related Behavior	X		
Unreconciled Heterosexual Identity		X	
Critical Incident	X		
Passive Conceptualization			X
Active Conceptualization		X	
Identity Disintegration		X	
Heterosexual Identity Development		X	
Interdependent Heterosexual		X	
Independent Heterosexual			X
Unresolved Heterosexual			X

Note. N=10. *General* = a category endorsed by all participants; *typical* = a category endorsed by 5 to 9 participants; *variant* = a category endorsed by 2 to 4 participants.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this qualitative research project indicated that how heterosexual counselors conceptualize their heterosexuality is related to a number of individual and contextual factors. While the complexity of participant's heterosexual conceptualization is clearly evident in the results of this study, the potential impact of heterosexual identity

development on the counseling process is also apparent. Thus, close observation and cross-analysis of domains regarding heterosexual identity development were arranged in a meaningful way and debated to consensus to propose a cyclical, developmental, permeable, and multidimensional model of Conceptualized Heterosexuality (see Figure 1) which offers significant implications for understanding heterosexual identity.

It is important to note that the following model is a theoretical model of the conceptualization process of self-identified heterosexuals as opposed to a model of heterosexual identity development as presented in the review of literature. This means that while findings of this study may prove to be significant in understanding how individuals move through developmental processes to arrive at an endorsed heterosexual identity, this model more accurately describes the cognitive processes that qualify conceptualizing one's sexual orientation and sexual orientation identity and illustrate the intersection of multiple cultural identities at various points. This semantic distinction is important because it proposes that recognition, acknowledgment, acceptance, and identification with one's sexual orientation are collectively components of heterosexual identity development, whereas the scope of this study offers a depiction of how one perceives and assigns value to individual subjective experiences related to sexual orientation and sexual orientation identity and how those experiences combine and organize a conceptual picture of a single phenomenon.

#### Conceptualized Heterosexual Identity

The foremost construct under investigation in this study was heterosexual identity development (HID). The corresponding research question sought to investigate HID, however; cross-analysis of data and results suggest that HID, initially presumed to be a

primary development process for heterosexuals, and should more accurately be categorized as a single component of a broader cognitive conceptualization process (see Figure 1).

Collectively, the results of this study indicate that how heterosexual counselors conceptualize their heterosexuality is multifarious, complex, and allied to a number of individual and contextual factors and variables. The involvedness of participant's conceptualization is unmistakably evident in the results, in which 6 of the 10 domains were described as significant development milestones prior to heterosexual identity developmental processes began, accounting for the various biosociocultural influences suggested in proposed models of HID (Mohr, 2002; Worthington et al., 2002). Each domain can be characterized into five developmental dimensions: *inherent orientation responses*, *pre-conceptualized heterosexuality*, *heterosexual identity development*, and *identification*. Each of these dimensions contains explicit developmental characteristics and behaviors (see Figure 1) that interact synergistically.

#### *Inherent Orientation-Related Behavior*

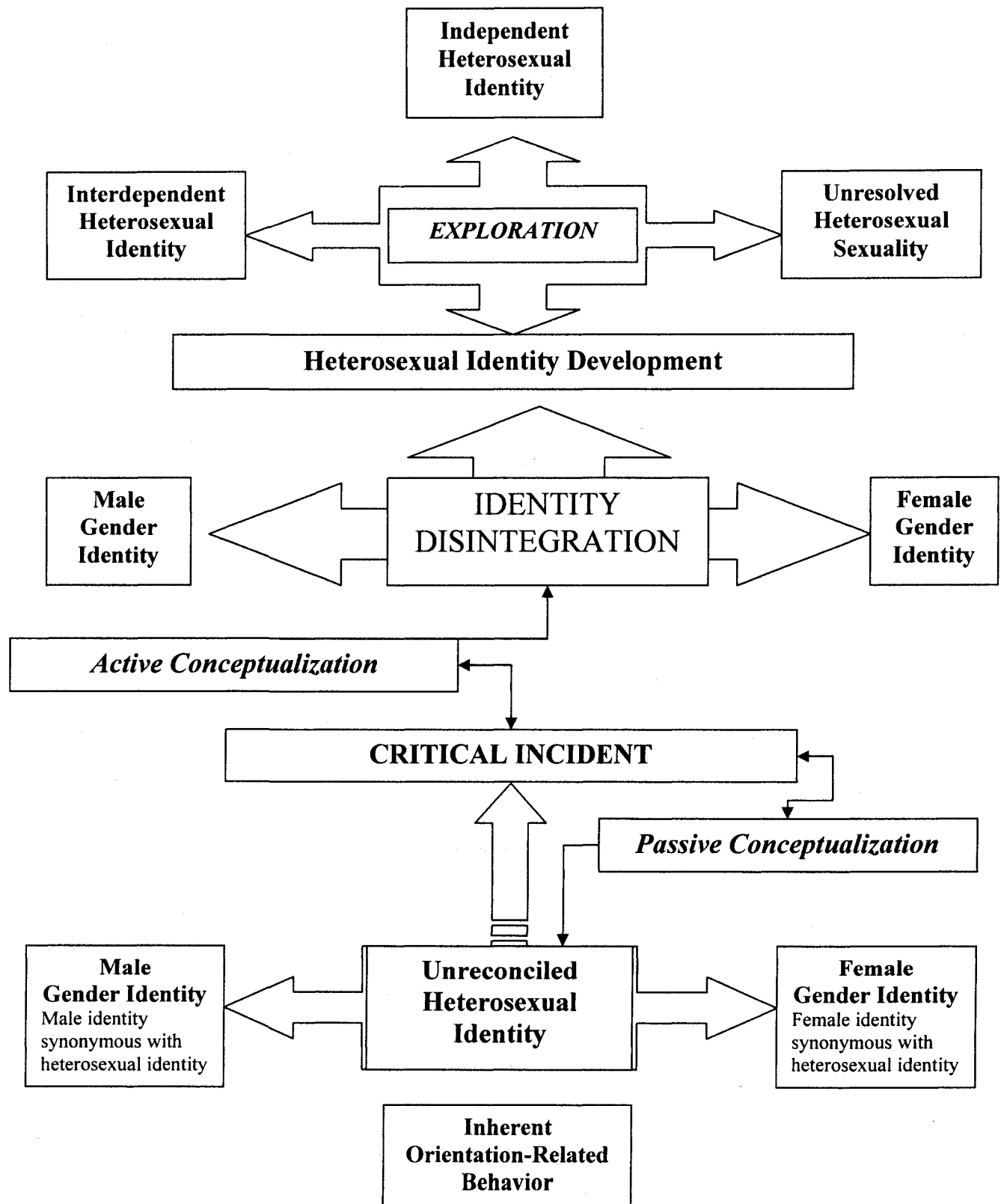
Inherent orientation was one general category experienced and endorsed by all participants. The inherent orientation-related behavior domain was present for all 10 (100%) of the participants. This domain was categorized as *general* as all participants endorsed this category. Each participant described recognition and response to biological antecedents and inherent sexuality-related impulses as consciousness emerged in late childhood and early adolescence. The implications for such findings are considerable. The discussion of inherent sexual orientation is often a subject of contention and disputation in earlier theories of sexual identity formation (Garnets, 2002). To date,

researchers who have sought to answer or address the question pertaining to inherent sexual orientation have been unable to offer any conclusive empirical evidence either substantiating or disputing the influence of biological antecedents. However, findings of this study suggest that individuals experience responses to sexual orientation-related impulses in late childhood and early adolescence prior to social consciousness emerges. These findings corroborate Worthington et al.'s (2002) distinction between *sexual orientation* (one's sexuality-related predispositions) and *sexual orientation identity* (one's conscious identification with one's sexual predispositions). Participant's reports advise that pre-conscious sexual orientation behavior was present prior to a conscious awareness of sexual orientation identity. Some participants demonstrated inherent orientation responses by reporting that same sex nudity elicited a curiosity response that was used to explore their own body sexually through masturbation or exploration of their own genitalia. One female participant stated:

I would say it was at 3 or 4 years old...that I would say that I was becoming sexual...in terms of heterosexual, I would say I started having feelings for guys...it would probably be kindergarten... I just assumed that's how I was...cause that's how I felt...and I enjoyed it! I have always been drawn to guys.

Similar responses were provided by the male participants reporting inherent orientation responses. However, male participant's inherent orientation responses included a comparison component, meaning that participants report demonstrating heterosexual behavioral responses that were later conceptualized as heterosexual through exposure to alternative sexual orientations. When asked to provide information about early heterosexual experiences, one male participant reported:

**Figure 1: Conceptualized Heterosexuality**





...it was before I was becoming social as a human...I was very young I guess before I could even conceptualize being attracted to the opposite sex...I think when you identify as something is when you understand or realize there is an alternative...if there's more than one box to check you check a box. But if it's the only thing you know it's hard to identity as anything. It's just who you are, so you are just being. I was just acting on how I felt...I liked girls...I just wanted to touch them.

This domain also included a same-sex explorative component. Participants report experiences in which they probed the genitalia of the same sex as a source of comparison of their own genital development. However, participants further report that this exploration was void of sexual arousal or interest. For instance, two female participants reported an early sexual experience with another female in adolescence. However, both females reported that this interaction, while it was a sexual interaction, the exploration was about exploring their own sexuality consider these experiences an impulse of inherent sexual feelings towards the opposite sex. When further describing this experience one female participant reported:

...I was not comfortable enough to explore how things felt with a boy at that age even though I wanted to. My friend and I just kissed and touched to see what it would feel like to be with a boy. We were only like 7 or 8...boys were not even on our radar...we were like practicing being with a boy.

These findings should be considered in light of research in the area of LGB education. Many participants reported that having unresolved issues concerning the timeless “nature-versus-nurture” debate regarding non-heterosexual orientation. It is significant to

note that these experiences were endorsed by the entire sample population in this study. This suggests that orientation responses or sexuality-related behavior may be inherent.

### Pre-Conceptualized Heterosexuality

This dimension includes several pivotal developmental characteristics conceptualized by participants in this study, which include: *unreconciled heterosexuality*, *critical incident*, *active or passive conceptualization*, and *identity disintegration*. These dimensions were noted to have occurred prior to heterosexual identity development processes.

### *Unreconciled Heterosexuality*

Unreconciled heterosexuality was a domain endorsed by 9 (90%) participants (5 females and 4 males), thus categorized as *typical*. Worthington et al. (2002) hypothesized that most self-identified heterosexuals were likely to experience very little conscious thought about ascribing to a heterosexual identity. Findings in this study suggest that because heterosexuality is a culturally prescribed norm in Western culture that is greatly endorsed within most American cultural groups, an unreconciled heterosexual identity was the starting point for most individuals. Aspects of sexual identity formation within this dimension reflect a range of sociocultural (e.g., familial, societal, cultural, spiritual) influences that construct an individual's value system. Similar to Mohr's (2002) first working model, *democratic heterosexuality*, characteristics of this dimension include individuals who have not seriously considered their identity as heterosexual persons. This dimension includes minimal reflection of heterosexual privilege and oppression. Worthington et al. (2002) discussed a similar stage in their proposed model of HID called, "*unexplored commitment*". Thus, it is vital to demarcate differences between these

paradigms. While unexplored commitment suggests that an individual accepts and adopts the dominant sexual orientation imposed by sociocultural variables, unreconciled heterosexuality emphasizes that gender identity formation was reported to be the salient sociocultural variable influencing sexual identity formation, while other influences (i.e., spiritual values) were significant, but of less importance in early identity development. In this dimension, gender identity development is almost completely undistinguishable from heterosexuality during initial phases of pre-conceptualized heterosexuality. Additionally, participants experiencing components of this dimension strongly ascribe to gender identity roles and tend to operate within culturally prescribed norms dictating heterosexual male and female specific behavior. Participant reflections suggest that gender roles were pervasive in their sexual identity formation. The dichotomization of gender roles into two distinct categories (male and female) regarding specific gender-related behaviors was the central focus of this dimension. For female participants, gender socialization suggested that seeking an opposite sex partner with whom one can procreate and unite in marriage was considered normal behavioral. This normal behavior was validated and affirmed in early play experiences. For example, one female participant stated:

...oh God...my mom loved it when we would play house. I'd be like the mom and my cousin or neighbor or friend...or whoever would be the dad. And we would like have babies and I would cook dinner and clean the house and he would go to work and do dad stuff. It was funny now that I think about it...but my parents really got into the fact that we played in that way. My mom always bought me and my sister toys that were like kitchen supplies or cleaning or cooking supplies. And it was funny too cause my sister

was so not into that...and it used to piss my mom off. She was way more into boy stuff like sports stuff.

This example is also a powerful depiction of the subtle gender roles imposed on males. Male participants report gender roles messages imply that masculinity and manhood can be and “should be” expressed through physical aggression (i.e., toughness, athleticism), restriction and suppression of emotions, and avoidance of characteristics stereotypically associated with gay male identity. Thus, many male participants default to heterosexual identity, regardless of inherent orientation congruence, to avoid being perceived as gay or feminine- which is oftentimes used synonymously in male participant language. These gender standards ultimately shaped and confined participant’s sexual identity formation and resulted in conformity of both gender and sexuality-related norms.

For many participants’, gender and sexuality were intertwined with religious orientation-related factors. Worthington et al. (2002) assert that virtually every religious affiliation attempts to dictate, regulate, and define sexual behavior and moral sexuality through theological teachings. This proved to be of particular relevance to some participants.

Conclusively, such findings suggest that heterosexuality is influenced by the particular values, needs, or beliefs espoused by many sociocultural factors; however, gender identity and religious orientation proved to be the most germane to participants.

#### *Critical Incident & Conceptualization Processes*

This domain is a pivotal dimension within this model because it captures participants’ movement from an *unreconciled heterosexuality*, that is mostly reliant upon culturally prescribed normative sexual behavior, to a place of dissonance, which relies on

critical analysis, cognitive complexity, and a self-authorized value system. The critical incident domain was the second *general* category that all participants endorsed.

Participants reported wide-ranging experiences in this category that the research team deemed to be a subjective critical incident experienced by the participant that led to a conceptualization process. Participants report experiencing the following critical incidents: first sexual encounter, pregnancy, education, exposure to alternative sexual identities, divorce, and spiritual dissonance. Such incidents were deemed to be critical by the consensus team because these incidents resulted in identity disintegration (separation of gender identity and sexual identity development processes), which led to participants realizing that their gender identities and sexual identities were interconnected, yet separate. One female participant said:

I remember after getting divorced feeling like I was just numb. I mean I didn't feel attraction towards any guys or females. I was just hurt and didn't want to even think about sex. It was at that time in my life that I really thought to myself, wow, now that my marriage has ended what does that say about me a woman. I felt like I had like failed and I just didn't know what that meant about me as a female, you know. Cause the heterosexual dream is like to get married and have kids...and I did, well a kid, but I had failed at that. So I had to really not deal with my sexuality and figure what this all meant about me being a woman...and it had nothing to do with my being heterosexual or non-heterosexual. And I remember asking myself...wow, I feel numb towards guys, does this mean I like girls or I want to try being with a woman...and I explored that and thought about it but not

for long because I was like, yeah I like men in general...in that way...just not right now.

This conceptualization process varied in intentionality and regard. Thus, some participants actively moved towards a higher conceptual understanding of heterosexuality (*active conceptualization*), while others digressed back to an unreconciled heterosexual identity (*passive conceptualization*). . Categorized as *variant*, only 1 white, male participant reported *passive conceptualization*. Prior to experiencing a critical incident, individuals within this domain tend to reduce sexual orientation to oversimplified bipolar dichotomies-people are either heterosexual or homosexual. Participants engaging in a passive conceptualization maintained this paradigm, while individuals engaged in active conceptualization developed a more versatile and complex understanding of heterosexuality. Male participants reported critical incidents related to education and being exposed to non-heterosexual persons. One male participant's critical incident included both education of sexuality existing on a continuum and exposure to a non-heterosexual person. This participant stated:

Like in my multicultural counseling class...the guy was talking about Kinsey's scale and I thought it was so neat...it like made me really have to think about things. And I knew that this one guy in our class was gay cause he was like so open about it, but if he had not said he was gay...I would not have been able to tell because he was like very masculine in stuff and he really chimed in on the conversation of Kinsey using his self as an example and I like really got what he was saying. That was weird for me cause then I had to ask myself could I be gay? Am I like attracted to this guy or do I just admire like qualities about him like his

courage to say that in class or just self-disclose, cause I wouldn't have done that...you know you ask yourself the question of how did you become [heterosexual] and so much stuff come to play...what if I was gay like and I can look at guys and say he's attractive guy you know and umm...I realized that I can feel all of these things and still realize that I am heterosexual still...but now I understand the complexity and how involved that is.

Similarly, individuals reporting active conceptualization also develop a more sophisticated and relativistic understanding of non-heterosexual statuses as their understanding of self evolves. Purposeful exploration and evaluation of one's own sexual preferences, needs, and values are typical behaviors within the active conceptualization domain. This domain was reported to be an exclusively cognitive process. Individuals within this domain were not interested in experimentation with other persons or exploration of modes of sexual pleasure or expression. Furthermore, while this process is purposeful, it is not specifically goal-directed. Participants did not express a desire to move towards any ideal status. Participants in this domain solely express interest in exploring feelings of dissonance. Some participants identified and shared experiences that included, exposure to LGB identity, pregnancy, loss of a relationship, and lecture or presentation on sexuality theory in counselor training

Other participants reported similar epiphanies in multicultural counseling and human development courses. This suggests that exposing students to information concerning heterosexual developmental processes is advantageous in nurturing and cultivating a less dualistic perspective on human sexuality and orientation. Comparable implications were suggested in several writings (see also Marcia, 1987; Worthington et

al., 2002) regarding heterosexuality. Oftentimes referred to as *diffusion*, Marcia (1987) and Worthington et al. (2002) describe similar experiences as the absence of exploration or commitment which oftentimes results from crisis. The key characteristic of this identity status is intentionality and goal direction, similar to critical incident. Thus, it is important to illuminate the difference between *diffusion* and *critical incident*. In this study, participants reported that incidents that were not articulated as a crisis (i.e., exposure to LGB orientation, increased education on sexuality theory, first sexual interactions) were just as germane in their developmental process and led to conceptualization.

A significant theme was the variance between what constituted a crisis per each participant. Thus, the research team believed that naming this domain *critical incident* most adequately captured and articulated this variance among participants' subjective experiences.

### *Identity Disintegration*

Active conceptualization also proved to be the vessel by which the separation of gender identity and heterosexuality occurred. As a person's understanding of their heterosexuality shift from a dualistic paradigm to a more integrated and complex understanding, participants report that they began to understand the differences between their gender and heterosexuality. This domain was a *typical* response experienced by 7 participants (6 female and 1 male) and refers to the separation of gender identity and sexual identity and was reported to be a response following a critical incident. One female participant reported:



After going through that [divorce] and still being a mother...even though now I wasn't a wife...I don't know...it just felt like no more rules applied. I realized that being heterosexual didn't guarantee anything...and I just didn't want to be the submissive, domesticated women that I thought I had to be...and he [ex-husband] thought I was suppose to be like that...and I did too even though I wasn't like that...I just remember thinking that being straight isn't easy either...being a woman is just hard whether your gay or straight.

In this dimension, individuals begin to isolate and examine circumscribed gender roles and consider the implications of how those gender-related suppositions have inadvertently constructed their sexual orientation identity. Thus, when these identities are detached and one is able to explore heterosexuality as a sole identity, individuals move toward a process of heterosexual identity development.

#### Heterosexual Identity Development

The findings of this study suggest that heterosexual identity development is a single component of conceptualized heterosexual identity, which is in contrast of more recent models of heterosexual identity development (see Eliason, 1995; Marcia, 1987; Mohr, 2002; Sullivan, 1998; Worthington et al., 2002). Recent models of heterosexual identity development provide micro-articulation of the developmental processes of heterosexuality, whereas the scope of this research project offers a macro-articulation of these developmental processes. Thus, heterosexual identity development proved to be one of many significant components of conceptualized heterosexual identity. By qualitatively exploring this construct, results suggest that a number of conceptual milestones must be

achieved prior to engaging upon a process of heterosexual identity development. Such findings offer breadth to our understanding of heterosexuality.

Results further suggest that the process of heterosexual identity development is initiated by an explorative trajectory of one's own sexuality-related preferences, behaviors, values, modes of expression, and preferences in opposite sex partners, after one has moved past a pre-conceptualized heterosexual orientation. This domain was categorized as *typical* as the 9 participants experiencing this domain also experience active conceptualization. One female participant reported:

As I started to think about it...I could have been gay and my life...my upbringing manipulated that. That's crazy; huh...I just needed to make sure I was really straight. I mean...I guess I knew I was but as all my friends started to experiment in college...like messing around with other girls and stuff and coming out...the question was just right in my face. I couldn't avoid it. So I asked myself the question...I explored like who am I sexually attracted to...who do I fantasize about...like who could I actually be in a relationship with. And that question was the only one that was clear...I could never see myself actually being in a relationship with a women...like a real serious and committed relationship...I just don't like girls in that way. But I did discover that I find some women attractive...maybe even sexually attractive...but I decided that I can feel that way and still be heterosexual.

Consequently, active conceptualization is the vehicle by which one begins to conceptualize the process of HID.

Collectively, results of this study suggest that the primary characteristic of this stage is exploration. Similar to the propositions of most HID research (Eliason, 1995; Marcia, 1987; Mohr, 2002; Sullivan, 1998; Worthington et al., 2002), HID exploration consistently suggested both cognitive and behavioral modes of investigation. Cognitive exploration is viewed as the “safest” mode of exploration by many individuals, as it maintains the integrity of many individual cultural values, oftentimes adopted by one’s religious affiliation. Cognitive exploration activities are predominantly abstinence-oriented and may include activities such as reading books about sex, viewing sexually explicit images that challenge dichotomous notions of sexuality, or freely engaging in self-gratifying sexual activities while openly exploring sexual fantasies. The chief component of cognitive exploration is that its solitary discourse. Individuals engaging in behavioral exploration experiment with different types of sexual activities that generally involve other partners. For some, behavioral exploration may include romantic and sexual relationships with people having characteristics that reject one’s circumscribed notions acceptable sexual partners. For instance, an individual may have a romantic relationship with a partner of a different race, gender, social class, religious affiliation, etc. Behavioral explorative activities also include adoption of gender atypical behaviors (i.e., sex with multiple partners, reverse in masculine and feminine sexuality-related behaviors). While the goal of this exploration is to gain an increased understanding of one’s own sexuality and to self-authorize heterosexuality and other sexual orientations, the intention of exploration is to investigate one’s inherent sexual orientation and seek congruence with one’s sexual identity. Behavioral exploration was a reported experience of female participants. Male participants report cognitive exploration only. Attempting to

explain cognitive exploration processes that solidified his heterosexuality, one male participant reported:

I remember seeing gay porn once accidentally...it was two guys and I was curious as to what like would happen...it was like I couldn't turn away, but I didn't want to look. I was like a freshman in college...what I do remember is not feeling sexually aroused...I was so glad about that. Cause its kind of like you know that you are definitely not gay cause you like feel it within yourself...but until you really have to like be in a situation that you can make sure you don't have like some sexual response or like erection to that kind of stuff...you just got to make sure. And I didn't have that kind of response, I guess...and that's when I was like...bet, yeah...I knew I wasn't gay.

Despite one's decision to cognitively or behaviorally explore their sexual orientation, the purpose of exploration in HID is to engage in a self-directed process of rejecting circumscribed sociocultural influences with the goal of constructing a self-constructed heterosexual identity. The intention of this process is to adopt a personal sexual value system that addresses one's sexual needs, preferred sexual activities, preferred characteristics of sexual partners, meanings of sexual fantasies, and recognition of sexual orientation. It is important to note that HID does not necessarily lead to identification with one's sexual orientation, however, the process of HID does lead to a heterosexual orientation identity. This identity may or may not be congruent with one's sexual orientation.

## Identification

Heterosexual orientation identification is relatively neglected in current models of HID. While recent models identify statuses, stages, phases, and working models of heterosexuality, these models fail to articulate and expound upon the culminating event of explorative processes- ultimately identifying as heterosexual. However, achieving a self-constructed heterosexual orientation identity is the goal of HID. In this dimension, individuals speculate that their sexual orientation is heterosexual, however; are willing to explore the nature of their heterosexual feelings. Thus, exploration in HID leads most individuals to 1 of 3 identified heterosexual identities: (1) Interdependent Heterosexual Identity, (2) Independent Heterosexual Identity, and (3) Unresolved Heterosexual Identity.

### *Interdependent Heterosexual Identity*

The following domain was endorsed by 7 participants and categorized as *typical*. In this dimension participants define their sexuality as an interconnected and interdependent aspect of their total identity. For most individuals, individual identity development is a convergent and synergistic process of developing multiple aspects of one's identity simultaneously (i.e., spiritual identity, gender identity, social identity, racial/ethnic identity). However, for others, explorative processes are thwarted by an aspect of one's identity that takes priority over others. For instance, one female informant reported:

I mean I get that sexuality is complex and I agree with that...and I respect that and honor that in other people, but for me...as a Christian, I am saying that I believe in the word of God that says that he made women to be with men and I

value and love that about my faith...so being heterosexual is a part of who I am as a Christian...that is just my belief. Part of surrendering my life to Christ is about me being heterosexual and living my life that way as I look for a man to spend the rest of my life with and procreate...and all that good stuff.

Male participants that reported experiencing active conceptualization consequently endorsed this category. Subcategories and/or subthemes that emerged within this domain included: possible incongruence with inherent orientation, congruence with orientation as irrelevant, unwillingness to disconnect sexuality with other aspects of identity, and interconnectedness of identities as purposeful, intentional, and a cultural expression. These subcategories suggest that interdependent heterosexuals are less concerned with identifying with a sexual orientation that is consistent with inherent – orientation related behavior and are more concerned with adopting a sexual identity that is an outward reflection of their beliefs and values related to another aspect of their identity (i.e., spirituality).

Findings of this study suggest that some participants, while engaging in explorative processes, resolve that one's spiritual identity is an inimitable and uncompromisable component of their collective identity. This suggests that for these participants, spiritual identity development was the foundation by which one chooses to define all supplementary aspects of their individual identity. For example, a number of participants in this study branded their Christian values as the dominant force governing the extent to which they were willing to explore their sexuality. Similarly, in many cases religious values also dictate values and beliefs concerning gender identity. Thus, interdependent heterosexuals contend that identity exploration of any kind, must be

within the context of their spiritual and religious values. While interdependent heterosexuals may be willing to adopt a more comprehensive and cognitively complex definition of heterosexuality, their heterosexual value system is explored, defined, and articulated within the context of a prevailing identity. Theoretically, such constraints would be debilitating and limit one's ability to explore sexual orientation uninhibitedly, however, it is essential to remember the goal of exploration in heterosexual identity development-to accomplish a self-constructed heterosexual identity. Thus, interdependent heterosexuality is an achieved and self-authorized heterosexual identity.

#### *Independent Heterosexual Identity*

Only 2 participants (both female) reported experiencing this dimension of heterosexuality categorized as *variant*. This heterosexual identity closely resembles Worthington et al.'s (2002) *synthesis* status. Presumably the most sophisticated identity, independent heterosexuality is achieved via uninhibited cognitive and behavioral exploration leading to a construction of heterosexuality that encompasses one's own sexual value system and translates into positive and non-judgmental attitude toward other persons, regardless of sexual orientation. The sexual value system of independently identified heterosexuals is inclusive, comprehensive, and dependent from other aspects of one's identity. Developed solely based on one's sexual orientation, independent heterosexuality does not comprise the integrity of any other aspect of one's identity. Participants described this experience as resulting after having considerable cognitive and behavioral exploration. When asked to describe a defining moment as a heterosexual, one female participant stated:

I remember I participated in this sexuality workshop...and part of what we had to do was like watch several hours of all different kinds of porn...like guy on guy, girl on guy, girl on girl and so on...and it was like we had to record our arousal to all these different kinds of porn. And it was when I realized that I may have a sexual attraction to women...and I realized that this didn't mean that I was not heterosexual...cause I would never pursue this attraction but I may fantasize about being with a woman and with a man at the same time...and I could never do it in real life...but it just made me realize how many different ways you can feel about lots of different sexual things but its all of those things, plus making a decision about how you are going to identify given consideration of all these things that make up your sexuality. It was just an enlightening experience that has really helped me understand the sexuality of myself and my clients better. Cause if I can have these range of feelings and still be heterosexual, than other people probably have this range of feelings also.

Subcategories in this domain included: cognitive or behavioral exploration of inherent orientation, redefining heterosexuality, recognition that heterosexuality is not the "normal" orientation, tendency to believe that people are either born heterosexual or homosexual, and LGB affirming attitudes. Both female participants reported that they believed that sexual orientation was a function of biology and nature. Similarly, both female participants reported LGB affirming attitudes. One female participant stated:

Being gay is not about not being heterosexual. It's about being gay. People need to understand that sexual orientation is biologically predetermined. But I get upset...when people make being heterosexual or gay or bi or lesbian about a



choice. We shouldn't limit our understanding to this narrow perspective. For me...I just try to be an ally in my personal life as well as my professional life.

Another female participant describing how her heterosexual identity affects her work with LGB clients wrote in her reflective essay:

Internally, I have felt at times a sense of guilt-guilt from the privilege of having unearned privilege of being heterosexual. I have never acknowledged this to a client and I have not experience a client addressing this difference. I've actually never had a GLB client voice the difference in our sexuality or ask about mine. I keep a Safe Zone sticker on my office door and have books, etc. around my office in the effort to communicate I am a GLB ally.

Consequently, the results of this study suggest that independent heterosexuality was most closely related to professional identity congruence (*the acknowledgement that a comprehensive understanding of sexuality was related to higher levels of counselor effectiveness*).

#### *Unresolved Heterosexual Identity*

Categorized as *variant*, 2 female participants report continual questioning and probing of sexual orientation, despite having committed to a heterosexual identity. This domain was only a reported experience of female participants. The following identification is presented to capture the experience of heterosexual individuals that embark upon cognitive and behavioral exploration and discover that their sexuality may be more closely related to a bisexual orientation, however; for various reasons continue to self-identify as heterosexual. Participants reported experiencing this domain, attribute heterosexual identity to relational interests or wanting to be in an intimate relationship

with an individual of the opposite sex, although they acknowledge sexual attractions towards the same sex. For instance, one female disclosed:

I think I have always like to look at women...of course you look at women like I want her boobs, I want her ass, ahhh, I would kill for her flat stomach...but occasionally I might have a thought like, she's hot or she's really attractive. I wondered...what that meant about me as a heterosexual woman. Of course, I wouldn't like ever hit on a girl I thought was attractive that way...cause my feelings were not about intimacy per se...I don't know...I think of it like a lust thing...nothing real, I guess."

The results of this study found that some individuals discovered that while they have sexual feelings and attractions towards the same sex, their relational preferences were opposite sex. Such findings are not included in recent HID literature, however; offer a more intricate perspective of heterosexual identity and sexual orientation identity.

#### Implications for Counselor Preparation and Future Research

Current literature concerning HID is founded on existing literature on minority/majority identity development and lacks available empirical evidence to support speculative assertions. Thus, the findings of this study and corresponding proposed model of conceptualized heterosexuality, offer a more efficacious conceptualization of heterosexual identity. However, it is important to outline the results of this study within the framework of the design. The findings of this study offer an in-depth and thick description of the experiences of a small sample size, thus, the scope of implications must be considered within the context of a qualitative design. Nonetheless, the results of this

study offer a sufficient empirical foundation for counselor preparation and future research.

### *Implications for Counselor Training*

Beneath the surface of homophobia and heterosexism, is fear and ignorance. Many counselors have been taught to address these feelings and attitudes by learning about culturally different individuals, while having limited or no opportunity to reflect upon their own cultural identities. This was particularly true for heterosexually identified counselors in this study who overwhelmingly reported that they had never reflected upon their heterosexual identity and its influences on the counseling process. Thus, initiative must be developed to increase awareness, change attitudes, and enhance knowledge and skill among heterosexual individuals. Findings of this study are promising and provide considerable insight as to how to prepare counselor trainees to recognize and acknowledge their own cultural diversity in the counseling relationship and address biases concerning sexuality that may be harmful to potential clients. Worthington et al. (20022) hypothesize that a greater understanding of heterosexuality may reduce the tendency for counselor trainees to dichotomize sexual orientation. This paradigm shift could ultimately lead to “increased understanding of and comfort with sexuality-related issues that client may bring to counseling, as well as facilitate the understanding of issues related to ordinate-subordinate group dynamics (p.524)”. One of the more conclusive findings of this study suggest that reflection of one’s heterosexual identity resulted in increased insight and adoption of a more complex and multidimensional understanding of heterosexuality and sexual orientation. However, while all participants endorsed this domain, increased insights for participants did not automatically lead to counselors being

able to translate this cognitive change in their personal value systems into counseling-related behavior. Few participants were able to articulate the impact of increased insight on the counseling process. Most participants believed that their heterosexuality only affected the counseling process when the potential for sexual attraction was possible. Such findings provide guidance for counselor educators. For heterosexually identified counselor trainees, examination of their heterosexual orientation identity should be the first step towards reducing heterosexism and developing GLB affirming attitudes in counseling. Counselor trainees must have the opportunity to construct positive attitudes concerning the sexuality of others upon a positive conceptualized understanding of self. Results of this study indicate that affirmative environments and programs that encourage self-exploration for heterosexual trainees, provides opportunities for critical incidents (i.e., direct contact with GLB identified individuals, introduction to heterosexuality-related research), and combat stereotypes about the GLB community, can be successful in increasing GLB affirming attitudes and reduce trainees tendency to dichotomize sexual orientation. It may additionally foster increased comfort with and understanding of sexuality and sexual identity related issues presented in counseling.

However, taking the next step to initiate a program or address heterosexual exploration in counselor training programs may be a challenge for counseling faculty. Similar to counseling trainees, the proposed model and implications may prove to be of benefit to faculty members and supervisors. Similar to counseling trainees, heterosexually identified faculty are encouraged to engage in a process of self-exploration as a means of increasing their effectiveness as a supervisor to GLB students and facilitating a culturally-affirming and GLB friendly training atmosphere.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the counselor educator and supervisor to offer students opportunities to translate increased awareness of self and sexuality into best practice behaviors in counseling. Counseling faculty members should not automatically assume that because students demonstrate a decrease in heterosexist views and beliefs and an increase in GLB affirming attitudes, they will be able convert such paradigm shifts into effective counseling techniques, skills, and practice. Thus, counselor educators can assist in this process by integrating discussion of attitude transference in various aspects of their curriculum. For instance, faculty may offer case vignettes of heterosexual and non-heterosexual clients of various genders and cultural backgrounds and invite students to participate in a discussion of how the counseling process and relationship is influenced by the orientation of the counselor. Activities that offer counseling trainees opportunities to reflect upon their own sexuality and its influences on the counseling process may help clients to eliminate notions of normative sexual orientation which may result in increased self-awareness and greater preparedness to work with clients of diverse cultural backgrounds.

### *Implications for Research*

Implications suggested are based on review of multicultural and sexual identity formation literature, and observations of a small number of participants within a setting. Research, particularly further qualitative inquiry, is needed to further support the model or suggest modifications. Future research endeavors should include the design of statistical instruments that will measure key constructs presented in the proposed model. Designing quantitative instruments that measure heterosexual attitudes, recognition of membership in privileged, oppressive majority group behaviors and heterosexist behavior

would be advantageous in providing a more valid correlation between heterosexual attitudes and GLB affirmativeness. Additionally, future research activities may focus on furthering outcome based counseling interventions targeting minority and majority sexual identity development, high-risk sexual behavior, homonegativity, and heterosexism. Lastly, the proposed model must be tested with respect to implications concerning counselor effectiveness. Such studies could be aimed at offering statistical validity to speculative correlations between heterosexual identifications and counselor effectiveness. While results of this research show potential and offer an expanded perspective of heterosexuality, it is merely a basis from which a wide-ranging body of research can ultimately be produced.

#### LIMITATIONS

CQR designs, in general, share some common limitations. The most obvious being the small sample size utilized (Hill et al., 2005). In this study, 10 participants were interviewed. This limitation was addressed by continuous member checking and cross-analysis. Research team members analyzed and interpreted the initial data. As a result of no new themes emerging from the data, it was not necessary for the participant sample size to increase, as saturation was achieved within 10 participant data sets.

Additionally, potential researcher bias is a general limitation of this study. This issue was addressed by utilizing two teams of a total of seven researchers and a qualified auditor with varying demographics in the areas of ethnicity, gender, varying levels of counseling experience, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, prior to the collection of data, the research team met and discussed biases and expectations of the interview protocol. Each researcher was given the opportunity to answer a set of open-ended

reflective questions to assist them in exploring and discussing their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings regarding this phenomenon and the design of the study. Addressing researcher bias was an on-going and continuous task in the consensus process. All team members were encouraged to be aware of each others biases and assumptions and agree to point them out in a respectful manner during the course of this discussion and throughout the process of reaching consensus. The explicit awareness of each member's unique perspective allowed the team to monitor bias through the coding process, selection of core domains, and development of proposed model. The author included a detailed description of each member's biases and expectations in the study. However, despite efforts to address this issue, the author was aware that it is was still likely that some findings were simply the result of the way in which the study was organized around the phenomenon, how interview questions were conceptualized and designed, the personal style of the interviewer and the prompts used, and ultimately, the lenses though which the data were interpreted.

It is also important to note that while research team members met face-to-face for several consensus meetings, some codes and domains were argued to consensus via electronic communication (e.g., telephone, email, and teleconference). While research team members were able to arrive at consensus regarding data, it is important to note that face-to-face communication may provide optimal conditions for facilitating consensus in CQR methodology (Hill et al., 1997, Hill et al., 2005).

Demographical characteristics of the participants were additionally a limitation. Participants were pulled from very specific regions of Virginia. These geographical limitations may suggest a limited understanding of this phenomenon as it pertains to

cultural variables. Participant's age also ranged from the age of twenty-two to thirty-six, limiting the implications for lifespan development and maturation. Additionally, Caucasian and African American participants were the only ethnic/racial groups captured in this study. Including other ethnic minority groups may have yielded different results. Moreover, a majority of participants currently work in a college counseling setting, which may limit the implications and findings of this project.

Furthermore, the nature of this design was collaborative, in that it examined the intersection of two phenomenon- HID and the influences of HID on the counseling process. Thus, a study of either phenomenon as a sole entity may yield a richer depiction of both the participants' experiences and each phenomenon.

An additional limitation of this project was that the primary investigator was the sole interviewer. This was advantageous in establishing prolonged engagement and convenient sampling; however, utilizing a variety of interviewers to conduct interviews may have yielded different data.

Furthermore, the sampling method may have produced a biased sample. Simply agreeing to participate in the study suggests some bias regarding motivation for participation. Examining only the informants who agreed to participate does not account for the experiences of other counselors that chose not to participate and motivations for non-participation. Data collected from this group may have yielded different findings.

Lastly, the design of this project does not yield a statistically significant understanding of the phenomenon, limiting the generalizability of this study.

## CONCLUSION



The proposed model and its implications regarding the counseling process simply provide a framework that challenges oversimplified notions of sexual orientation by offering a conceptualized perspective of majority group membership. This model offers a conceptualized illustration of heterosexually identified counselors and illuminates the need for counselor preparation to train culturally contentious counselors who construct positive attitudes towards culturally different persons upon an awareness of one's own cultural identity. By doing so, counselor educators help to develop counselors who are able to be role models, social advocates, and change agents for clients and in the world in which we live. Such counselors could be a catalyst for positive social change and help to create a world in which all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, are valued for who they are and not defined by rigid labels.

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## Appendix A

# RESEARCH PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC WORKSHEET

## Contact Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: *Male* *Female*  
(please circle one)

### Race/ Ethnicity

\_\_\_\_\_ Black/ African American  
\_\_\_\_\_ White (Not Hispanic)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic Origin  
\_\_\_\_\_ American Indian  
\_\_\_\_\_ Asian and/o Pacific Islander  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other not specified:  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Education Background

#### Highest Level of Education Completed (please circle one)

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelors Degree (BA, BS, BSW, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Masters Degree (MA, MS, MSW, M.Ed.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Education Specialist (Ed.S.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate (PhD, MD, etc.)

### Current Educational Status

#### Are you currently a student in any of these training programs?

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelors Degree (BA, BS, BSW, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Masters Degree (MA, MS, MSW, M.Ed.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Education Specialist (Ed.S.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate (PhD, MD, etc.)  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Licensure/ Certification

\_\_\_\_\_ LPC  
\_\_\_\_\_ LCSW  
\_\_\_\_\_ Licensed School Counselor  
\_\_\_\_\_ Licensed Clinical Psychologist  
\_\_\_\_\_ LMFT  
\_\_\_\_\_ NCC  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Work Setting

\_\_\_\_\_ Private Practice  
\_\_\_\_\_ Community Agency (city/state)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Community Agency (non-profit)  
\_\_\_\_\_ School  
\_\_\_\_\_ Hospital  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Post-Masters Counseling Experience

\_\_\_\_\_ Years  
\_\_\_\_\_ Months

### Sexual Orientation

\_\_\_\_\_ Heterosexual  
\_\_\_\_\_ Gay  
\_\_\_\_\_ Lesbian  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bisexual  
\_\_\_\_\_ Questioning

### Current Relationship Status

\_\_\_\_\_ Heterosexual Marriage  
\_\_\_\_\_ Heterosexual Relationship  
\_\_\_\_\_ Same Sex Union  
\_\_\_\_\_ Same Sex Relationship  
\_\_\_\_\_ Single  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Participation Interest (please circle one)

\_\_\_\_\_ Very Interested (please contact me)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat Interested (need more info)

### What is the best way to contact you?

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Interview Protocol

#### Interview One: Possible Focused Life History Interview Protocol

1. Can you tell me as much as possible about your early experience as a heterosexual?

#### *Probing Question(s):*

1. What was your life like before you identified yourself as being heterosexual?
2. Can you tell me about your life as a heterosexual?
3. How did you come to identify yourself as heterosexual?
4. How do you remember feeling about being heterosexual?

#### Interview Two: Possible Details of Experience Interview Protocol

1. Can you describe to me a specific pre-heterosexual experience?

#### *Probing Question(s):*

2. Can you describe a specific heterosexual experience?
3. Can you describe a specific heterosexual experience in counseling?
4. How did you feel about that experience?
5. What specific experiences established your sexual identity?
6. Can you describe specific experiences of an attraction to another person?
7. Can you describe to me a specific same-sex encounter?

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent Document/ Solicitation Letter Old Dominion University

Dear Sir or Madam,

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study. The project title is: *A qualitative inquiry of how self-identified heterosexual counselors conceptualize heterosexual identity development and its influences on the counseling process.*

The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participating in this research and to record the consent of those who say YES. If you are interested in participating in the research project, your completion of the attached demographic sheet will serve as record of your consent. You may keep this form for your records.

The primary investigator of this study is Breyan N. Williams-Haizlip, M.Ed., a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling in the College of Education at Old Dominion University. The primary investigator will be assisted by a research to consisting of Rebekah Byrd and \_\_\_\_\_, fellow doctoral students. These research team members will primarily aid in the data collection and analysis.

The purposes of this study are (1) to explore how self-identified heterosexual counselors and counselor trainees conceptualize their sexual identity development and (2) how the conceptualization of that identity influences the counseling process. Although a proposed model of heterosexuals' identity development process exists, research has yet to provide any empirical evidence validating this model. Results of this study seek to assist in increasing counselor's multicultural competence and effectiveness in working with minority clients.

Literature review, data collection and data analyses will occur between July 2008 and February 2009 tentatively. You are being asked to participate in a three-phase research project: (1) participation in two separate interviews that will occur within 3-4 days of each other, (2) complete a written reflection essay; and (3) assist researchers in checking for accuracy of interviews and interpretations by reviewing transcripts of the interviews. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to: (a) complete a participant demographic sheet; (b) respond to interview questions about your sexual identity development process in 2 separate 35-40 minute interviews; (c) complete a brief reflection essay upon completion of the interview; and (d) review the transcripts from your interviews to verify that your comments were accurately recorded. You may provide as little or as much information as you choose in the interviews and in the reflection essay. You may also provide additional information or further explain any aspect of the interviews or essay at any time during this research study. During the interviews, the investigator will audiotape the interviews. Audio taped interviews will be transcribed by the interviewer and destroyed immediately thereafter. The primary investigator will have no knowledge of your identity, and any written materials will contain no identifying information about you.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. All information obtained about you in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will NOT provide any identification of the participants.

The primary investigator wants your decision about participating in this study to be absolutely voluntary. It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from this study at any time. If you say YES, your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any compensation for such injury. In the event you suffer injury as a result of participation in this research project, you may contact Breyan Williams-Haizlip at 757.683.6101 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

If the researcher finds any new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then that information will be shared with you immediately.

By completing the attached participant demographic sheet, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, please contact the primary investigator, Breyan Williams-Haizlip at 757.683.6101.

If you are willing to participate in this study voluntarily, acknowledging receipt of this documentation, and would like to be contacted for participation, please complete the enclosed demographic worksheet. Please return the original copy of the demographic worksheet in the pre-stamped envelope provided.

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and participation regarding this matter.  
Sincerely,

Breyan N. Williams-Haizlip, M.Ed.  
Doctoral Student  
Old Dominion University  
Department of Educational Leadership & Counseling  
bnwillia@odu.edu

## **Appendix D**

### **Reflective Essay Instructions**

Dear Valued Participant,

At this time, I would to personally thank you for your participation in the project. We know that participation in this project required a significant amount of commitment and time and for this we are truly appreciative.

Over the past week, you have courteously participated in two interviews concerning both heterosexual identity development and the counseling process. At this time, we would like to ask you to reflect on what you have said about your life as a heterosexual counselor and write a short essay addressing the following questions:

- How does you sexual identity, if at all, affect work with heterosexual client?
- How does it affect, if at all, your work with GLB clients?
- Are there any final thoughts about heterosexual identity, the counseling process and/or this study in general?

Feel free to write as little or as much as you would like as there are no minimum or maximum writing requirements. Enclosed is an essay booklet in which you may choose to write your response. If you feel more comfortable providing a typed response, you may also do so. Please return the original copy of your completed essay to the return address indicated on the enclosed pre-stamped envelope. You are not required to provide any postage for the return of these documents as your participation has been more than enough. Again, thank you for you participation and if you have any questions regarding any aspect of this project, feel free to contact the primary investigator, Breyan Williams-

Haizlip at 804-943-6001 or via email at [bnwillia@odu.edu](mailto:bnwillia@odu.edu). On behalf of the entire research team...Thank you.

Sincerely,

Breyan Williams-Haizlip  
Primary Investigator  
Old Dominion University

***\*\*\*If you are interested in receiving a final copy of the manuscript please provide your mailing information at then end of your essay and we will send you a copy via standard mail.***

## VITA

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**Breyan N. Haizlip, M.Ed., QMHP**

1843 New Lincoln Circle  
Hopewell, Virginia 23860  
[bnwillia@odu.edu](mailto:bnwillia@odu.edu)  
[breyan.haizlip@cnu.edu](mailto:breyan.haizlip@cnu.edu)

804.943.6001 (PERSONAL)

757.594.7005 (OFFICE)

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**EDUCATION**

<b>PhD</b>	<p>Old Dominion University Counselor Education and Practice (CACREP Accredited: <i>pending approval</i>) Graduate Teaching Assistantship Areas of Interest: <i>School Counseling</i> <i>Multicultural Counseling &amp; Research</i> <i>Counselor Education &amp; Supervision</i> <i>Community Mental Health Counseling</i> <i>College Counseling</i> <i>Qualitative Research Design</i></p>	<b>May 2009</b>
<b>M.Ed.</b>	<p>Virginia State University Counseling Education &amp; Practice Cognate: <i>School Counseling</i> <i>Multicultural Counseling</i> <i>Community Mental Health Counseling</i></p>	<b>December 2006</b>
<b>B.A.</b>	<p>Virginia State University <i>Major: Sociology &amp; Social Work</i></p>	<b>May 2003</b>

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**LICENSURE & CERTIFICATIONS**

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Virginia School Counselor-*under review*  
Licensed Professional Counselor-*board eligible; in progress*  
Nationally Certified Counselor-*board eligible; in progress*  
Qualified Mental Health Professional-*QMHP*  
Certified MH Crisis Pre-screener-*Mental Health Crisis Assessment*

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**AREAS OF SPECIALIZED TRAINING & CONTINUED EDUCATION**

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Seriously Emotionally Disturbed Adolescents  
Substance Abuse & Addictive Disorders  
Urban Education  
Assessment in Self-Injurious Behavior: Interventions & Treatment  
Eating Disorders  
Minority Mentorship  
University Retention & Recruitment Strategic Planning  
Adolescent Conduct Disorders  
Psychotropic Pharmacology  
Mental Health Diagnosis & Assessment



Self-Injury & Suicide Prevention  
 Sexual Identity Development  
 Couples Counseling  
 Advanced Counseling Theory  
 College Counseling & Student Adjustment  
 Advanced Mental Health Agency Treatment Planning

<b>COLLEGE &amp; UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE</b>
--

**Assistant Director/ Counselor** *Newport News, VA* **2008-current**  
*CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY-Office of Counseling Services*

- Provide individual and group counseling and psychotherapy to university students to assist in defining and accomplishing personal and academic goals by providing counseling, advising, and mentorship, including acting as primary on-call crisis intervention specialist.
- Assist students in overcoming specific personal, educational, or behavioral problems that interfere with health and success in the University.
- Conduct seminars and training workshops to address developmental needs of students and support student adjustment and development in the residence hall and classroom through appropriate programs and services.
- Participate in student judiciary processes and collaborate and provide staff leadership & development to Department of Residence Life, Student Activities, and Student Affairs.
- Provide multidisciplinary clinical supervision to intern/extern/practicum students.

**Research Assistant** *Norfolk, VA* **2007-2008**  
*OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY- Department of Educational Leadership & Counseling.*

- Responsible for assisting with Qualitative and Quantitative research design, development, and methods. Assist in reviewing relevant literature, data collection, data interpretation, and training development on grant-funded university project. Responsible for research budget management and reporting. Extensive knowledge and experience with qualitative and quantitative data analysis and mixed method procedures including coding and SPSS procedures.

**Assistant to the Director of Graduate Counseling Program** **2007-2008**  
*OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY-Department of Education Leadership & Counseling*

- Various administrative responsibilities as assigned and supervised by Batten Chair and Director of Graduate Counseling Program to include, but not limited to, providing academic and career counseling and advisement to graduate students, CACREP course syllabi articulation, and personnel correspondence dissemination, program development & evaluation. Provide additional support via data management, organization systems development, record keeping and reporting.

**GTA Recruitment & Retention Coordinator** **2006-2008**  
*OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY-Department of Educational Leadership & Counseling*

- Assist Recruitment Chair/Director in creation, implementation, and evaluation of various recruitment & retention initiatives including assisting with community outreach, admissions, marketing strategies, planning special events, promoting minority recruitment, and budget management. Additional responsibilities include conference, workshop, and informational presentations, data management and spreadsheet development.

**University Instructor (Undergraduate & Graduate)** **2007-2008**  
*OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY- Department of Educational Leadership & Counseling*

- Courses Taught:  
*Family Guidance, Family Systems & Interventions, Career Counseling, Testing, Assessment, & Appraisal, Social and Cultural Diversity Issues in Human Services, Interpersonal Skills, Internship*

*Seminar, Introduction to Human Services, Psychoeducational Groups, and Human Service Methods*  
Teaching Assistant: COUN 633: Counseling and Psychotherapy Techniques; COUN 645  
 Multicultural Counseling; COUN 630: Career Counseling, Appraisal, & Assessment,  
 Experience providing distance learning/ online instruction in the following course:  
UNDERGRADUATE: Introduction to Human Services; Human Services Methods; Psychoeducational  
 Groups; & Family Systems.

**GTA Clinical Supervisor** 2007-2008  
 OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY- *Department of Human Services*  

- Provide ongoing clinical supervision & advisement to undergraduate and graduate advisees for Internship & Practicum.
- Provide academic and career related advisement to undergraduate and graduate students.

**Graduate Assistant** 2004-2007  
 VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY  

- Teaching Assistant: *Counseling Theories, Principles of Counseling, Professional Ethics in Counseling, Advanced Group Counseling, Educational Research, Counseling Skills.*

**Assistant Residential Director** 2000-2003  
 VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY- *Department of Student Housing & Residential Life*  

- Supervise and oversee residential assistants and residents of freshman dorm providing academic, social, and cultural enrichment programming to incoming freshman in a manner that promotes and maintains safety, academic success, university judicial policy, and co-curricular participation.
- Provide professional leadership and staff development to assist with the supervision of all student development, residence life functions, and residential assistants including staff hiring, supervising, training, manages hall programming and student staff payroll.

**Greek Life Advisor/ National Pan-Hellenic Council President** 1999-2000  
 INDIANA UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA- *Department of Student Affairs & Activities*  

- Provide legislative counsel and organization advisement to 67 established Greek social and service oriented sororities and fraternities serving as a liaison between school administration and student governing bodies including National Pan-Hellenic Council.

**Multicultural Student Counselor/ University Coach** 1999-2000  
 INDIANA UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA- *Department of Multicultural Studies*  

- Provide guidance & academic counseling to minority students; inform & link students to multicultural organization, resources, support and services; provide academic support including assisting students in educational planning & extracurricular participation.

<b>COMMUNITY COUNSELING &amp; ADMINISTRATION</b>
--

**Substance Abuse Therapist** *Surry, VA* 2008-current  
 DISTRICT 19 COMMUNITY SERVICE BOARD  

- Primary responsibilities including providing group and individual substance abuse psychotherapy and counseling and outpatient services by coordinating and collaborating with community probation officers, court liaisons, and inpatient service coordinators. Responsible for monitoring and assessing mental health and substance usage. Secondary budget management/grant funding management for referrals to inpatient treatment facilities.

**Mental Health/ Substance Abuse Clinician** *Surry, VA* 2006-2007  
 DISTRICT 19 COMMUNITY SERVICE BOARD

- Provide intensive individual and group therapy and counseling services, treatment planning, & comprehensive case management services including psychosocial life skills training, medication management, community support, benefits eligibility services, vocational rehabilitation, crisis intervention & assessment, and substance abuse services.

**Mental Health/ Substance Abuse Outreach Counselor** **2004-2006**  
**RICHMOND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AUTHORITY**

- Function as a part of interdisciplinary team providing intensive individual and group community-based counseling services, treatment planning, & comprehensive case management services including psychosocial life skills training, medication management, community support, benefits eligibility services, vocational rehabilitation, crisis intervention & assessment, and substance abuse services to dual-diagnoses adults in metropolitan setting.

**Lead Crisis Case Manager** **2003-2004**  
**RUBICON, INC.** *Richmond, VA*

- Provide crisis intervention services, group therapy, and case management services to dually-diagnosed (MH/SA) consumers experiencing acute psychiatric symptoms in Crisis Stabilization Unit; Responsible for establishing and coordinating treatment and discharge plan; function as a liaison between community resources, and long-term service providers.

**Community Development Director/Camp Director/Site Director** **2001-2003**  
**YMCA of Greater Richmond** *Chester, VA*

- Manage community development program via serving as a liaison between non-profit service initiatives, community funding sources, and community members.
- Oversee program, budget, staff and daily operations of 3 school-based, community development programs & summer camps providing philanthropic services to low-income housing developments;
- Manage fiscal budget; prepare & report management of grant funding, organize special events for annual fund raising, provide administrative support, organize & train staff and volunteers for seasonal programs, establish and maintain positive relationships with education and community officials.

<b>SCHOOL COUNSELING EXPERIENCE</b>
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**School Counselor Staff Developer/ Independent Consultant** **2001-Current**  
**DEVELOPMENTAL STUDIES CENTER** *Oakland, CA*

- Extensive domestic travel providing research-based workshops, conference trainings, and presentations school counselors nationally.
- National staff developer/trainer for educational research institute. Provide best practice and staff enrichment training to elementary and secondary school counselors in North Dakota, Vermont, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, Nebraska, Michigan, New Mexico, California, Washington, Maryland, Virginia, Texas, Arizona, Florida, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana.
- Conducted over 125 educational research consultations and approximately 25 conference and workshop trainings in United States.

**Practicum/Internship Clinical Supervisor** **2007-2008**  
**OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY** *Norfolk, VA*

- Provided ongoing group and individual clinical supervision to school counseling practicum and internship students.

- Responsible for coordinating internship/practicum site experiences, collaborating with community school district partners, evaluating school counseling clinical skills & knowledge, and assisting students in compiling school counseling portfolio's.

#### Practicum & Internship (600 hours)

2006-2007

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Chesterfield, VA

- G.W. Carver Middle School
- C.C. Wells Elementary School

Professional Membership & Service
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American Counseling Association (ACA)

American School Counseling Association (ASCA)

Association of Multicultural Counseling & Development (AMCD)

Association of Counselor Educator & Supervision (ACES)

Counseling Association for Humanistic Education & Development (C-AHEAD)

Virginia School Counseling Association (VSCA)

Virginia Counseling Association (VCA)

Virginia Association for Counseling Education & Supervision (VACES)

Southern Association for Counseling Education & Supervision (VACES)

*Multicultural Interest Network Co-chair (2008-2009)*

Chi Alpha Epsilon Honors Society

Chi Sigma Iota

*Doctoral Student Mentorship Program*

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

National Pan-Hellenic Council

**PROGRAMS:**

*NPHC Day of Reckoning: Addressing Hazing and Unethical Practice in Black Sororities and Fraternities. Indiana University of Pennsylvania.*

Association for Urban Education

National Association for Black Educators (NABE)

NAACP (Petersburg Division)

Black Graduate Student Union

African American Cultural Center

**PROGRAMS:**

*Millennial Generation Political Efficacy Campaign (2008)*

*Parental Empowerment Movement: Empowering Minority Fathers (2008)*

*The State of Black Families Consortium (2008)*

*Breaking through the Shackles of Oppression (2008)*

*An Examination of the "N" Word in HipHop Culture (2008)*

*HipHop Culture vs. HipHop Music (2007)*

Voter Registration 2008 Community Organizer

Barack Obama Campaign 2008 Community Organizer

*Young Voters Voter Registration (2008)*

*Ba"ROCK" the Vote (2008)*

HBCU Advocacy Committee

*The Finish Line: Fostering Minority Success in Higher Education (2007)*

Enhancing Minority Student Experience Committee

*Supporting Under-represented students*

Multicultural Student Association (CNU)

Research, Grants, & Program Evaluation
--

**PUBLICATIONS & RESEARCH:**

Haizlip, B. N., Hays, D. G., & Smith, B. (2008: under review). Addressing the under-representation of African American faculty in counselor education programs. *Manuscript submitted to Counseling Education & Supervision.*

Haizlip, B.N. & Hays, D. (2008: in progress). Teaching within the box: Exploring heterosexual identity development in counselor preparation. *Manuscript to be submitted to Journal of Counseling Education & Supervision.*

Haizlip, B. N. & Hays, D. (2008: in progress). The evolution of heterosexual identity development and its influences on the counseling process. *Manuscript submitted to be submitted to Journal of Counseling Development.*

Haizlip, B. N. & Hays, D. (2008: in progress). Conceptualized Heterosexual Theory: A Consensual Qualitative Research Study. *Manuscript of be submitted to Journal of Counseling Development.*

Haizlip, B.N. (2008: under review) Preparing African American counselor education students for professorship. *Manuscript submitted to Black Higher Education.*

Haizlip, B.N. (2007). *Bringing forth life in a PhD program*, SACES Newsletter.

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**GRANTS:**

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<b>Awards &amp; Nominations</b>
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ACA 2009 Courtland Lee Multicultural Excellence Nomination

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<b>Presentations</b>
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Haizlip, B. N. (2009: Accepted) *Sexual identity development and the counseling process*. ACA National Conference, AGLBTIC Sponsored Program.

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