

# Faculty Member Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Male Counselors in Training: A Social Cognitive Career Theory Perspective

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**Abstract** The purpose of this qualitative content analysis was to describe the attitudes and behaviors of U.S. university faculty members ( $N=168$ ) who recruit, educate, and develop male students in female-dominated graduate counseling programs. Drawing on social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, and Hackett 1994), we identified three factors (i.e., opportunities, barriers, supports) that potentially influence vocational persistence for U.S. male students planning to enter a female-dominated occupation. The results highlight four distinct educational experiences for male students: *leader*, *stigmatized*, *invisible*, and *nurtured*. Implications for future research and educational training are discussed.

**Keywords** Female-dominated occupation · Male students · Social cognitive career theory · Counseling · University faculty · Gender · Qualitative content analysis

## Introduction

The percentage of men employed in helping professions such as counseling, psychology, and social work has decreased in percentage since 1972 by 42, 55, and 56 %, respectively (U.S.

Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS] 2014) and interdisciplinary literature from the United States (U.S.) and United Kingdom (U.K.) indicates the feminization of the mental health professions may impact men who enter these vocations (Lupton 2006; Pease 2011; Shinar 1975; Simpson 2004, 2005). Scholarship largely conducted in North America investigated this phenomenon from men's perspectives (e.g., Anthony 2006; Kippenbrock 1990; Mills et al. 2004; Sherrod 1989; Stott 2004; Walthew 2004), yet there is minimal research on U.S. university faculty who recruit and educate students (e.g., Barnes and Austin 2009), and thus who are influential over the persistence and vocational choice stability of men entering these female-dominated occupations.

## Gender and Female-Dominated Educational Programs: The Case of U.S. Counseling

Males comprise 28.9 % of the employed U.S. professional counselor population (BLS 2014), and 26.2 % of American Counseling Association (ACA) members (R. Sites, personal communication, April 8, 2013). Male students once outnumbered female students in U.S. counseling graduate programs (Kazienko and Neidt 1962; Mezzano 1968); however, since the 1960s male student enrollment within these programs has declined significantly (Ritter 1979), and females outnumber male students 2:1 today (Schweiger et al. 2012). Although there are limited studies investigating faculty dispositions toward students in programs in which they represent the gender minority, affirmative faculty-student interactions have been linked with student persistence (Stott 2004) and adoption of more egalitarian gender role attitudes (Sax et al. 2005). Considering male student enrollment and retention are concerns for faculty in a variety of female-dominated helping professions (Anthony 2006; Michel et al. 2013), it is critical for U.S. counseling

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