

CLINICAL AND SUPERVISORY CHALLENGES FOR MALE PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEES

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THE MALE GENDER ROLE AND MALE TRAINEES

Men are a significant but declining portion of trainees. Are we doing enough to help male trainees face their training challenges? Multicultural competence in supervision and training requires that we are **gender-aware** (see Good, Gilbert, & Scher, 1990), not just nonsexist or gender-neutral.

What might underlie the unique needs and challenges of male trainees? The **Male Gender Role Conflict**, or GRC (O'Neil, 1981) is the maladaptive aspects of traditional male socialization (a.k.a., the *masculine mystique*) that lead to problems coping with the demands of life that require more flexibility.

Themes of traditional male role socialization:

- Independence, self-reliance, competitive over collaborative (“Big Wheel”)
- Restriction of emotional expression (Restricted Emotionality, “Sturdy Oak”)
- Toughness and aggression (“Give ‘em Hell”)
- Antifemininity and homophobia (“No Sissy Stuff”)

TRAINING CHALLENGES FOR MALE TRAINEES

1. Affect & Empathy
2. Intervention Style
3. Power and Privileges
4. Trainee-Supervisor Relationship
5. Internal Conflict, Identity, and Self-efficacy as a Therapist
6. Problematic Behavior

STRATEGIES TO ASSIST MALE TRAINEES’ DEVELOPMENT

Training Directors offer recommendations to address male trainees’ need.

1. Empathy & Rapport

Empathy for the male role conflict can help male trainees feel safe and more comfortable exploring their discomforts in supervision. Strategies include special types of rapport in supervision and having male mentors.

2. Suspension of Judgment

Epoché (Greek): to abstain from or set aside biases and preconceived notions.

Lay Theories of Meaning, the social-cognitive research by Carol Dweck et al.

Two types of theories we all have about why we are the way we are.

1. Entity Theorists believe human attributes are fixed, not subject to personal development
2. Incremental Theorists believe human attributes can change through a person's

Stereotype Threat (the work of Claude Steele). Minority group members' performance is lowered in the presence of low-ability stereotype. Teaching people to adopt incremental theory can reverse this effect. We can help male trainees adopt the incremental theory in order to reduce the effects of the stereotype threat, and supervisors need to be incremental theorists, too.

3. Cultural Responsiveness in Cross-Cultural Supervision

Like counseling, supervision can be conceptualized as always-multicultural. Supervisors will do well to *"acknowledge the existence of, show interest in, demonstrate knowledge of, and express appreciation for the client's and supervisee's ethnicity and culture that place their problems in a cultural context"* (Burkard et al., 2006).

The culturally responsive supervisor will need to attend to the supervisee's gender and related issues, not only ethnocultural variables.

Being Culturally Responsive to Male Trainees: Implications for Supervision & Training

- ➔ Supervisors can help male trainees by creating a safe environment for them to discuss their male gender role conflict. Particularly important for male-male dyads?
- ➔ Training programs and supervisors should be aware of, and value, the characteristics of men in the same way they value other aspects of diversity (Wester & Vogel, 2002).
- ➔ Honor the male trainee's "developmental heritage":
 - Find what might be adaptive and positive about his male characteristics.
 - Encourage him to go beyond those strengths to new areas that can stimulate growth.
 - **The double challenge:** Male trainees with higher gender role conflict see themselves as an ineffective counselor. Yet they are less likely to express their concern or ask for help.
 - Empathically challenge his views of self and clients that might be biased by patriarchy.
 - Help him challenge patriarchy and free himself from its confines.

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