The purpose of this article is to make some of the subtler aspects of epistemology immediately relevant to counselor educators by clarifying important epistemological issues without distorting or oversimplifying them. This is a challenge that we hope proves to be of immediate value since the current lack of discourse on conceptual aspects of pedagogy in counselor education is of concern (see Korcuska, 2016). We approach this topic from the stance that constructivism and phenomenology serve as distinct epistemological lenses through which to view the process of learning. We clarify some tenets of constructivism as a response to positivism and indicate how phenomenology not only fits into this epistemological debate but uniquely serves the interest of counselor preparation. By providing a clear description of epistemological issues within constructivism and phenomenology, we hope to engage the counselor education community in a rigorous discussion on the merits of phenomenology as a unique and valuable pedagogical enterprise (Wilkinson & Dewell, 2019; Wilkinson & Hanna, 2016).

The Growth of Constructivism in Education

For the past thirty years, constructivism has played an increasingly important role in educational theory, research, and practice (Confrey & Kazak, 2006). It has evolved rapidly and extensively from its beginnings in the cognitively-oriented genetic epistemology of Piaget (1954) and culturally-oriented social learning theory of Vygotsky (1965) to incorporate the works of Halliday (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010; Wells, 1994), Maturana (Cunningham, 1992; Proulx, 2008), and Dewey (Hickman, Neubert, & Reich, 2009; Johnston, 2009; Prawat & Floden, 1994). While this variety of unique perspectives has resulted in the development of numerous instructional practices (e.g., scaffolding; guided instruction) and teaching approaches (e.g., constructionism; problem-based learning), constructivism remains intimately connected to the

broadly encompassing notion that "communication and understanding are a matter of interpretive construction on the part of experiencing subjects" (von Glaserfeld, 1981, p. 194). This statement is general enough to encompass constructivism in its cognitive, social, radical, and critical forms as applied to such diverse areas as mathematics education (Confrey & Kazak, 2006; Ernst, 1998; Lochhead, 1991), science education (Bachtold, 2013; Dorion, 2010; Tobin, 1993), instructional technology (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992; Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005; Payne, 2009), educational psychology (Prawat & Floden, 1994; Pritchard & Woollard, 2010; Tobias, 2010), and counselor education (Guiffrida, 2005; McAuliffe & Eriksen, 1999).

Constructivist teaching methods emerged to deal with important concerns regarding traditional educational approaches, particularly surrounding those teacher-centered instructional practices that regard learners as passive recipients of information (Pegues, 2007). The constructivist movement has effectively shifted educational discourse in a learner-centered direction, making student needs and considerations a central educational priority. For counselor educators, the foundation of a constructivist epistemology is that learners uniquely construct, rather than gather or acquire, knowledge (Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998). This is an intuitively appealing perspective because it corresponds with the clear distinction between learner-centered and instructor-centered practices. However, it is also important to recognize that constructivist practices rest upon a specific set of epistemological assumptions that are all too often left unquestioned (Phillips, 1995; Tobias & Duffy, 2009).

There is immense value in aligning pedagogical practices with epistemological assumptions insofar as reconciling the two enhances the soundness of our teaching methods (Kirschner, 2009). We contend that a basic grasp of epistemological concepts is a prerequisite for developing an ideologically-sound teaching approach. Our intention is to clarify why this is

particularly important in counselor education, as well as to show how a phenomenological pedagogy can provide a valuable supplementary approach to constructivist methods. To address these ideas, this article will clarify and evaluate the epistemological tenets of constructivism in contrast to phenomenology and demonstrate their relative impact on learners in counselor education.

Epistemological Foundations of Constructivism and Phenomenology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and knowledge justification. As an epistemology, constructivism serves as an explanation for the nature of knowing rather than as an educational theory of learning principles (Schunk, 2012). However, its epistemological stance has distinct implications for educational practice. The constructivist position is that learners uniquely construct, rather than gather or acquire, knowledge. In terms of educational practice, this means that knowledge is not "out there" in the world to be discovered. Rather, it is constructed within subjective experience and is contextualized in terms of social or communal meaning-making (Bredo, 2006). Phenomenology takes a very different position, maintaining that knowledge is directly acquired by observing and apprehending phenomena in our immediate experience (Husserl, 1970). For educational practice, this means that there is indeed a discoverable world "out there" and that we can refine the accuracy of our knowledge of how it is given to us in consciousness by rigorously investigating our direct experience of phenomena.

The distinction is crucial because any presumption as to what constitutes knowledge is intimately linked to our decision-making process as educators. Our beliefs as to how students learn has a direct impact on how we think about, design, and implement a sound teaching approach (Kirschner, 2009). In other words, our epistemological assumptions influence our teaching practices regardless of whether or not we have thoughtfully considered the topic of

epistemology. To clarify the essential implications of the issue at hand, the following sections define and explore the epistemological tenets that ground constructivism and phenomenology. Points of consideration include how each view justifiable beliefs and valid truth claims in relation to the principles of *coherentism* and *foundationalism*, as well as the consequences of these views in regard to subjective experience and the realism-idealism distinction.

Justifiable Beliefs: Between Coherentism and Foundationalism

A primary constructivist position involves replacing truth as an absolute process within an absolute reality with the notion of truth as relative inquiry-in-practice (Kirschner, 2009; Schunk, 2012). This distinction parallels, and is partially derived from, the longstanding debate in philosophy over what justifies *truth claims*, or propositions that one holds to be true (for a review, see Feldman, 2003). The constructivist position most closely aligns with epistemological *coherentism*, as rooted in Quine's (1990) studies of ontological relativism. Coherentism holds that a belief is justified when it is supported by other justifiable beliefs in such a manner as to establish a coherent belief structure (Lehrer, 2010). This means that all personal beliefs are constructed upon other personal beliefs in a continuous cycle, *ad infinitum*. In practical terms, it means that belief structures require only internal consistency, rather than objective evidence, to be justified. As such, personal beliefs cannot be legitimately questioned so long as those beliefs are part of a coherently structured belief system and there is no conflict among existing beliefs within the mental construction (Feldman, 2003; Lehrer, 2010).

Coherentism stands in stark contrast to *foundationalism*, which holds that a belief is justified only when it corresponds with a verifiable basis of evidential truth (Alston, 2010). In foundationalism, such evidence aligns with the scientific agenda of positivism, or the idea that there are logical, empirical, or otherwise discoverable grounds to all truth claims. As such,

foundationalism is the epistemological basis for "traditional" teaching approaches that suggest justified beliefs must be supported by direct and verifiable evidence. Alternatively, coherentism reflects a relativistic epistemological stance that belief justification is context-dependent, or grounded in personal and historical situations (Lehrer, 2010). So, whereas foundationalism aligns with the so-called "modernist" view that human beings as rational subjects can arrive at clearly delineated truths about the world, coherentism aligns with the so-called "postmodernist" notion that human beings are not rational subjects who discover the world as it is, but are interpreters who craft unique and context-dependent meanings about the world (Susen, 2015).

However, there remains a third position to consider. *Foundherentism* - a hybrid term that merges foundationalism and coherentism - asserts that a belief is justified when it is both supported by direct and verifiable evidence and aligns within a coherent belief structure (Haack, 1993). It thus embraces both the foundationalist view that verifiable experience is a necessary condition for justified beliefs and the coherentist view that justified beliefs exist within context-dependent systems. However, it denies the more extreme positions of both foundationalism (i.e.; justifiable beliefs must be based upon fundamental truths) and coherentism (i.e.; there are no fundamental truths, only coherent belief structures). Numerous scholars have argued that phenomenology adheres to neither foundationalism nor coherentism (see Føllesdal, 1988; Hopp, 2008; Zahavi, 2003), insofar as Husserl "takes adequate and conclusive truth as a regulative ideal, that is, a goal attainable only in infinite endeavor" (Zahavi, 2003, p. 67). As such, truth is neither "out there" in the so-called "external world" waiting to be discovered, nor an undiscoverable subjective construction. Instead, the world and the subject are indistinguishable due to *intersubjective constitution* (Husserl, 1931; also see Zaner, 1970).

Although the term intersubjective constitution sums up a complicated set of ideas and

arguments, its implications related to foundherentism is simple to grasp via comparison to other epistemologies. Foundationalism claims that a belief is justified when it is grounded in basic beliefs that correspond with the reality of the external world, thereby presupposing that the external world is directly accessible to knowing subjects. Coherentism asserts that a belief is justified when it is part of a coherent system of beliefs, presupposing that the world is not directly accessible to the knowing subject. Foundherentism, as an epistemological basis for phenomenology, claims that a belief is justified when the knowing subject directly experiences the external world and then compares her observations with other knowing subjects, thereby presupposing that there is indeed a directly accessible external world but that the observations of individual subjects may vary (Haack, 1993). As such, a basic belief is justified only insofar as it accurately corresponds with descriptive observations made by other knowing subjects. It is this critical reconciliation of evidence-seeking in foundationalism with contextual mutuality in coherentism that allows phenomenology to bridge the gap between constructivism and positivism.

The phenomenological approach provides a means to enhance counselor preparation methods because its fits naturally between coherentism and foundationalism. Again, this is apparent when comparing positivist, constructivist, and phenomenological approaches to instruction. The positivist educator assumes that there are verifiably correct answers to problems, provides learners with those answers to build correct knowledge, and tests learners to ensure ideas have been accurately retained. Grounded in foundationalism, learners are viewed, so to speak, as "intellectual sponges" into which knowledge can be fluidly transferred. The constructivist educator assumes that there are few correct answers to problems, guides learners to build increasingly complex networks of internally-coherent mental constructions and asks

learners to determine whether those networks of ideas and beliefs are indeed coherent. Grounded in coherentism, learners are viewed as subjective agents with an inherent capacity to formulate coherent ideas and belief structures.

Alternatively, the phenomenological counselor educator assumes that the path to discovering correct answers to problems begins with rich descriptions provided by learners about the phenomenon under investigation, guides learners in the process of questioning, identifying, and investigating their immediate experience of a given phenomenon, and works with learners both to examine their own self-discovered evidence and to compare it to the experience of others investigating the same phenomenon. By moving the focus away from mental constructions and towards the direct exploration of any given conscious experience, the phenomenological approach asks counseling students to trade abstractions and mental constructions for experiential awareness and immediate apperceptions. Husserl held that everything a person is conscious of - referred to as *intentionality* - is subject to phenomenological investigation, including consciousness itself (Husserl, 1931). This includes ideas, thoughts, images, behaviors, acts of volition, and even understanding itself. Phenomenological learning takes place at this fundamental level of direct observation and apprehension - the foundation of the scientific method.

Phenomenological investigation thereby holds a middle ground that takes the reality of complex phenomena seriously without reducing that reality to a set of personal constructions. Learning need not be thought of as constructed to account for various subjective phenomena. Husserl (2000) - with his motto "back to the things themselves" (p. 168) - sought to escape the limits of subjective vagueness and arrive at some certainty of the nature of both world and self. There is indeed a world of experience to be discovered, and we can acquire intimate knowledge

of it through direct, rigorous, and verifiable investigation. We can also learn how consciousness acts upon perception in such a way as to affect how persons view their own experiences. This idea presupposes that there are individual variations in how subjects perceive experiences and thereby justify beliefs, just as constructivism claims. However, the phenomenological perspective further notes that variations in this so-called *act of constitution* must be directly investigated and compared with the perceptions of others to determine why such variations occur and whether those variations signify a relevant distortion in perception or belief (Zaner, 1970).

Truth Values: Between Idealism and Realism

Coherentism as an approach to belief justification is distinct from, but intimately related to, the *coherence theory of truth* that denies an objective or directly accessible external world (Ultanir, 2012). It thus rejects the *correspondence theory of truth* upheld by foundationalism, which asserts that truth denotes a correspondence between what is known and the precise nature of an absolute reality (Feldman, 2003; Russell, 1912). Guided by epistemological coherentism, constructivists assert that abandoning the correspondence theory of truth frees us to realize that truth is a subjective construction without any correspondence to a verifiable reality (Nola & Irzik, 2005). Constructivists thus highlight the virtually infinite number of creative ways in which knowledge structures can be coherently organized and thus deny any grounds for objective truth claims. Beyond rejecting the foundationalist requirement for evidentiary support in belief justification, constructivists also sponsor the viewpoint that objective evidence is not needed to justify a belief because truth itself is a subjective phenomenon.

This line of thought is a consequence of *epistemological idealism*, or the view that our knowledge of the world is mediated by mental representations or models of the world rather than being a direct depiction of the world as it is in-itself (Feldman, 2003). Aligned with this view,

most constructivists maintain that what may be known about an object (e.g., an apple's color, shape, taste, and size) is strictly "in" the observer's mind rather than "in" the object because the objective world, though perhaps existing, remains inaccessible to our direct apprehension (Feldman, 2003; Phillips, 1995). In contrast, the epistemological realist position maintains that the physical world independent of the knower is directly accessible. This realism-idealism dispute is an epistemological restatement of the debate over Cartesian dualism, which tends to force a choice between the individual knower as arbiter of reality and the physical world as foundation of reality. Most constructivists tend to deviate from a purely idealistic stance by acknowledging that the physical world exists while maintaining that the physical world should only be referenced in terms of how it frames human experience vis a vis the construction of mental representations, or mental models (Phillips, 1995; Schunk, 2012).

According to Nola and Irzik (2005), this results in a uniquely adapted version of the coherence theory of truth: that truth conditions of propositions can only be other propositions, which are derived from an ever-evolving construction of assimilated propositions. While this may sound confusing, it is actually a very simple principle that serves as a primary constructivist tenet, namely that:

> we can never compare either our experiences of, or our beliefs about, reality with how reality is because, in order to check whether our experiences or beliefs correspond with reality, further experiences or beliefs must always intervene. Thus, we can never have direct knowledge, or more strongly any knowledge at all, of how reality is (Nola & Irzik, 2005, p. 149-150).

In other words, knowledge according to constructivism is continually constructed by epistemic agents who are restricted to internal representations of the inaccessible external world. As such,

knowledge can only ever be viable, not valid. This perspective is not new to constructivism, having long been upheld by various anti-realist advocates as the *Inaccessibility of Reality Argument*, or IRA (Nola & Irzik, 2005). While the credibility of this position has been largely undone by epistemologists in recent years (see Nola & Irzik, 2005), it has nonetheless continued to influence constructivist practices.

The issue of viability is apparent in terms of the practical consequence of a constructivist take on knowledge in the classroom. Through various educational practices, constructivism seeks to replace the notion of the teacher as the transmitter of correct knowledge of reality with a pedagogical approach that emphasizes the importance of adaptive and personalized teaching methods that fit student needs (Boghossian, 2009; Merrill, 1991). As previously noted, this transition was spurred by a legitimate and well-intentioned desire to place student needs and considerations at the center of the learning process. However, there are unintended consequences in basing truth claims on viability rather than validity. As stated by Nola and Irzik (2005), "the conflation of knowledge with belief and the replacement of truth by viability [has] resulted in the loss of the idea of a right and wrong answer", quite often leaving constructivist instructors "reluctant to tell their students that their representations may sometimes be misconceptions, and that their constructions can be misconstructions" (p. 177).

Such equivocation of knowledge with belief is not something to be taken lightly. Insofar as there are substantial bodies of counseling research and knowledge that students must acquire to become effective practitioners, such an equivocation may leave many students underprepared or otherwise confused (Sewall, 2000). The learning needs of novices are vastly different from those of established professionals and the methods of inquiry used in a field of study may not necessarily be the best means of teaching its associated content (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark,

2006). Epistemological principles can influence the welfare of learners through an instructor's philosophical allegiance to a certain mindset, as when constructivist practices result in the development of naïve mental models rather than accurate, or well-articulated, mental models (Merrienboer & Kirschner, 2007; Wilkinson & Dewell, 2019).

Naïve mental models tend to reflect "misunderstandings or misconceptions where learners are unaware of the underlying relationships between elements" (Kirschner, 2009, p. 151). In a similar vein, Husserl (1965) made consistent reference to the importance of overcoming the *natural attitude* through a process of relentless investigation into our own primary preconceptions, presuppositions, and schema. An integral part of Husserl's (1931) method included instructions on how to move out of the natural attitude toward the goal of examining prepredicative or preconceptual experience (i.e. sense experience independent of judgment). It is in this mode that we can grasp how "the real world indeed exists" (Husserl, 1931, p. 14) by means of our direct, intuitive apperception of experience. While the world is indeed there - all by itself and on its own - phenomenology indicates that the world cannot be divorced from the constituting consciousness of the investigator, of which it is an integral part.

The result of this line of inquiry is not a declaration of a reality independent of, and without regard to, the world as it is. From a phenomenological stance, determination of reality is not a primary concern since such determinations are subject to a plethora of preconceptions and judgments. Husserl instead chose to focus on the primacy of experience. As such, phenomenology is a transcendence of both subjectivism and objectivism that allows the world to be there as it has always been but refines our understanding of it to include subjectivity itself. This involves arriving at original concepts that are adequately adjusted to the ground of pre-predicative experience and requires stepping outside of the natural attitude (Husserl, 1931). From

this perspective, it is unsurprising that the experimental psychologists Herrnstein and Boring (1965) described the phenomenological method as "the most primitive kind of observation of experience that it is possible for man to achieve" (p. 611).

Locating a middle ground between realist and idealist perspectives was precisely the task set forth by Husserl (1931). The phenomenological shift involves accurately describing world, mind, and conscious perception in a disciplined and rigorously honest fashion (Hanna, Wilkinson, & Givens, 2017). It should be noted that the phenomenological approach also allows for an inquiry based on reason that eschews the exercise of power. Since phenomenology allows the world to be as it is without changing anything (Husserl, 1970), the nature of the world is not dependent on our pronouncements of it. By clarifying and refining our perceptions, beliefs, and understandings of world and consciousness, phenomenological inquiry allows knowledge to emerge that is not limited by cultural frameworks that mold reality according to tradition, zeitgeist, expediency, or psychological need. Phenomenological methodology allows an egress from views that are bound by such self-referential tendencies, which makes it a suitable framework for confronting issues related to power and oppression.

Practical Considerations for Counselor Educators

It is important for counselor educators to consider the way in which positivist, constructivist, and phenomenological pedagogies differ in practice. We will briefly examine these pedagogies in light of two important areas of counselor training, namely theory acquisition and concept formation.

Theory Acquisition

A positivist approach to teaching counseling theory focuses on the scientific evidence for or against the veracity of any given theory (Rosenshine, 2009). In this respect, the growth of

evidence-based counseling practice reflects the positivist view that practitioners should be held accountable for providing those counseling services that have been empirically validated through research to meet the needs of individual clients (Norcross & Wampold, 2011). Foundationalism, seeking the verifiable basis for evidential truth, requires proof of efficacy. As such, counselor educators inclined towards positivism should, to maintain epistemological congruence, train students to closely examine the evidentiary basis for particular theories rather than choose theories based on ideological affiliation or preference.

A constructivist approach to teaching counseling theory focuses on alignment between personal meaning and theoretical worldviews. Recognizing that all counseling theories are equally effective in creating client change (Wampold, 2001), many counselor educators have chosen to embrace a personal-fit model of theory acquisition (Guiffrida, 2005; Kottler, 2002; Spruill & Benshoff, 2000). This is clearly a constructivist practice insofar as the subjective worldview of the student aligns with a viable, theory-based interpretation of psychological experience (Wilkinson & Hanna, 2016). Coherentism, seeking the internal consistency of belief structures, requires proof of alignment between subjective belief and counseling practice. As such, counselor educators inclined toward constructivism should, to maintain epistemological congruence, train students in theories by examining the correspondence between theory-based worldviews and the subjective worldviews of students.

A phenomenological approach to teaching theories focuses on psychological phenomena that counseling theories seek to explain. Husserl's (2000) motto "back to the things themselves" (p. 168) indicates that phenomenology is primarily concerned with immediate apperceptions rather than mere theoretical speculations. It views theoretical frameworks as abstractions that can lead students to oversimplify complex and interconnected psychological processes (Wilkinson &

Hanna, 2016). Rather than teach students each theory separately, phenomenological pedagogy highlights assumptions made by each theory and explores the similarities and differences therein. For example, behavior, cognition, and emotion-based theories each claim primacy in terms of the therapeutic change process. Rejecting this supposition, a phenomenological approach asks students to examine the parallels among behavior, cognition, and affect as manifest in their subjective experience (Wilkinson & Hanna, 2016). The result is that students learn that each theory has value in particular situations (akin to the evidence-based view of positivism) via a process that forces them to challenge assumptions and deconstruct their subjective view of experience (akin to the meaning-making view of constructivism).

Concept Formation

A positivist approach to teaching counseling concepts focuses on valid and well-established points of scientific consensus. Ideas should be clearly defined and explicated based upon the standard definitions within the field and in accordance with the most recent empirical evidence. The validity of counseling concepts for positivists is therefore found within major theories and conceptual models that have been rigorously scrutinized and tested. For example, training students in the cognitive-behavioral view of automatic thoughts, intermediate beliefs, and core beliefs may involve identifying definitions, showcasing their usefulness by teaching student how to implement particular models of cognition, and perhaps using a case vignette to highlight how these concepts come together to inform counseling practice. The focus remains steadfastly on ensuring students learn the accurate definitions, models, and practical applications of various concepts in an organized and proficient manner.

A constructivist approach to teaching counseling concepts focuses on viability of interpretations. Constructivists recognize that student interpretations are often inaccurate and so

promote teacher guidance as a normative practice (Duschl & Duncan, 2009). However, even as subjective experience becomes a central part of exploring concepts in constructivism, the emphasis remains on cognitive interpretations such as explanations and implications. Once again, students might be asked to consider the relationship between automatic thoughts and core beliefs through a cognitive-behavioral lens. Students discuss how they might explain the relationship between these concepts, or even share stories about their own struggles with negative self-talk. Additionally, the downward arrow technique might be introduced such that students discuss how this process works and when it might be beneficial. An experiential element is often involved, whereby instructors engage students by discussing how they understand automatic thoughts and core beliefs in order to construct a more refined sense of conceptual interconnectedness. Yet it remains a conceptual process, addressing implications and explaining the interdependency of concepts in a top-down fashion.

A phenomenological approach to teaching counseling concepts focuses on the immediate experiences of students. It does not assume that core beliefs, as a theoretical construct, is a beneficial notion for understanding self-valuation (Wilkinson & Hanna, 2016). Students are instead asked to examine concepts in terms of the psychological phenomena found in their immediate apperception. In other words, students are led to explore their own experience of, for example, automatic thoughts as a directly accessible phenomenon. Rather than explain automatic thoughts as "things that the patient tells himself" (Beck, 1967, p. 321), an instructor may have students recall a recent embarrassing experience in vivid detail and explore whether self-deprecating internal statements arise alongside the recollection. Students might then be asked to engage in exercises such as the call and response writing assignment (see Wilkinson & Dewell, 2019 for details) to examine how abstracted concepts can be deconstructed and thus translated

into a more concrete, experiential phenomenon. This is a descriptive and bottom-up process, requiring the activation of direct experiences such that students learn about concepts through direct apperception rather than abstract construction.

Arguably, this bottom-up approach may also be a necessary component of empathy training. If it is indeed possible to grow the empathy of counselors-in-training (Ridley et al. 2011; Ivey et al., 1968), then it seems beneficial to consider whether the training process might require experiential elements that are grounded in deconstruction. Does empathy grow as a consequence of personal factors beyond the reach of counselor educators, or are there creative techniques that might prove efficacious (Bayne & Jangha, 2016)? We would assert that empathy training coalesces with a phenomenological pedagogy that seeks to transcend the view of empathy as merely a cognitive or behavioral act within the natural attitude, putting students in direct contact with their own experience of empathic attunement in various training situations. The descriptive aspect of phenomenological inquiry, grounded within foundherentist principles that reject subject-object distinctions, may prove fertile soil for growing new approaches to empathy training that go beyond theoretical speculations and subjective explanations.

Discussion

The aims of constructivist and phenomenological pedagogies are not mutually exclusive, as both seek to address shortcomings in traditional didactic approaches by making the experience of students central to educational endeavors. However, it is important to distinguish between their epistemological assumptions since those assumptions lead to pedagogical consequences. Constructivism embraces the positions of coherentism and idealism to overcome the consequences of foundationalism and realism within positivist teaching approaches. Phenomenology take a different stance. As a bridge between the positions of realism and

idealism, as well as coherentism and foundationalism, phenomenology stands as a distinct endeavor that draws upon elements of both constructivism and positivism.

A merging of constructivist and phenomenological approaches could be particularly effective vis à vis flipped classrooms, which have been described as a constructivism-inspired approach seeking to "address the gap between didactic education and clinical practice performance" (Hawks, 2014; p. 264). Typical flipped classrooms involve having students observe pre-recorded video lectures before class and engage in more intensive group activities during class (Bates, Almekdash, & Gilchrest-Dunnam, 2016; Moran & Milsom, 2015). As discussed in the previous sections, the phenomenological approach to theory acquisition and concept formation focuses on examining the immediate experience of mental health phenomena and interconnected mental health processes. By providing students with traditional coverage (e.g., video-recorded lectures) of course content outside of class, instructors can use face-to-face class time as an opportunity to teach students phenomenological inquiry methods and to provide guidance in assessing as well as deconstructing challenging concepts (Wilkinson & Dewell, 2019).

Empirical research is needed to establish the relative merits of phenomenological methods as a supplement to constructivist practices. Researchers might consider developing instructional activities based on phenomenological principles and practices outlined in this article and others (see Wilkinson & Dewell, 2019; Wilkinson & Hanna, 2016) that can be tested in both content and supervision-based classes. The review of epistemological positions in this article thus serves to elucidate some of the core presuppositions that inform instructional practices as well as to provide a foundation for considering alternative approaches. We maintain that phenomenology can serve as a valuable pedagogical tool to enhance counselor education precisely because it

occupies a middle ground between foundationalism and coherentism as well as realism and idealism. As such, it provides a unique epistemological frame of reference to guide the development of innovative instructional strategies, methods, and practices in counselor education. Considering these arguments, perhaps a new professional discourse on positivist, constructivist, and phenomenological pedagogies in counselor education can be established.

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