Doctoral study is a major life event that influences students both professionally and personally. It is an educational journey that a large number of students never complete. Across disciplines, the attrition rate for doctoral students is approximately 50% (Lovitts, 2001; Nettles & Millett, 2006). Doctoral students have described their programs as being anxiety-provoking, stressful, competitive, and unsupportive (Lovitts, 2001), reasons which are likely linked to student attrition. Additionally, procrastination, low researcher self-efficacy, finances, poor advisor relationship, and subpar academic performance can all be contributing factors for non-completion (Haynes, 2008; Willis & Carmichael, 2011). Personal issues can also have an impact on the experience of doctoral students (Burkholder, 2012). With a list of factors related to doctoral students' experience this extensive, it is no surprise that several researchers have made doctoral education their focus of study in recent years (Lott et al., 2009).

Many researchers have explored the relationship between marriage and doctoral study by comparing the benefits and challenges of being married while in pursuit of a doctorate (see, e.g., Giles, 1983; Lott et al., 2009; Murray & Kleist, 2011). The benefits of being a married doctoral student are based in spousal support across several domains. In perhaps the most thorough investigation to date, Giles (1983) suggested spousal support comes in four distinctive forms: emotional/psychological, financial, academic, and basic needs. The demands of doctoral work require a strong support system that may exist early on in the form of a cohort, but as students enter the dissertation phase, the structured community that comes with taking classes with others is left behind (Hadjioannou et al., 2007). Thus, support from spouses becomes even more imperative.

Researchers have identified considerably more challenges than benefits for married doctoral students. Existing literature identifies several specific factors that may lead to, or

exacerbate, challenges for married doctoral students, including finances, time pressures, role conflicts, physical and emotional separation, communication issues, sexual concerns, and the presence of children (Brannock et al., 2000; Giles, 1983; Pederson & Daniels, 2001). While there has been little published in recent years that brings attention to new issues, the topic of married graduate students, and the challenges they face, continues to garner attention in contemporary news sources (see, e.g., Gobel, 2014; Wedemeyer-Strombel, 2018). The amount of attention paid to the challenges for married students speaks to the importance of the issue.

Doctoral Students in Counselor Education and Supervision Programs

Very little literature exists that focuses on the experience of doctoral students in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) programs (Protivnak & Foss, 2009). While students in CES programs likely encounter similar issues as doctoral students in other disciplines, unique issues may present themselves due to the additional requirements in order to fulfill this degree. CES programs require completing a practicum experience, as well as clinical, teaching, and research internships, typically with a heavy emphasis on self-awareness and growth. CES faculty may also encourage students to take on other responsibilities as a way to both increase student areas of expertise but also as a service to the program, some of which are unique to counseling and other mental health professions. These activities may include attending departmental meetings, facilitation of experiential groups, participating in research and publishing, and presenting at professional conferences (Hughes & Kleist, 2005). Most CES programs also require doctoral students to provide individual or group supervision for master's-level students (CACREP, 2016), which is a considerable time commitment as well. Additionally, supervision notes must be kept and gatekeeping and site concerns addressed, most of which happens outside of the supervision session. The supervising doctoral student is also required to receive their own supervision with

faculty as a part of this process, which adds another hour to their weekly schedule (CACREP, 2016). While these activities present opportunities for growth and training for future counselor educators and clinical supervisors, the pressures and time management can be overwhelming. These pressures, along with the academic rigor of doctoral study, may test the resilience of even the most capable students and affect their personal relationships negatively.

Male Doctoral Students in CES Programs

The majority of graduate students in mental health fields are females (Crothers et al., 2010; Healey & Hays, 2012). Thus, researchers who study the experience of graduate students in counseling tend to focus on the perspectives of female students. Some examples include, Meyers (2016), who studied females' learning experiences in CES, and other researchers who explored motherhood for CES doctoral students (Holm et al., 2015; Pierce & Herlily, 2013; Trepal et al., 2014). Those researchers who have explored the experience of male counseling students have reported both benefits and challenges of being a gender minority in a predominantly female field. Male students may experience privileges as the result of their gender such as access to strong male mentors (Crockett et al., 2018; Michel et al., 2015); however, male students may also feel like they lack a voice in the counseling profession (Michel et al., 2013). Males may also feel like they must monitor their comments, experience tokenization in the sense that they are asked to speak for all men, or feel out of place altogether in their programs (Crockett et al., 2018). Still, these studies focused on males' experiences at the master's level. Therefore, a gap in the literature exists in exploring the experiences of male students in CES doctoral programs.

Married Doctoral Students in CES Programs

Some researchers have explored the phenomenon of married students in counseling at the master's level and in other counseling-related fields (see, e.g., Fuenfhausen & Cashwell, 2013;

Legako & Sorenson, 2000; Murray & Kleist, 2011; Sori et al., 1996). Among the more salient findings, Sori et al. (1996) suggested that due to the nature of counseling programs, which ask their students to allocate so much of their personal energy to their own development, students often are left without enough emotional energy to deal with marital conflict. Additionally, counseling students may learn about the potential satisfaction that comes from relationships as part of their programs, and consequently, develop idealized expectations of their own relationships (Pederson & Daniels, 2001).

These circumstances likely exist at the doctoral level as well. Protivnak and Foss (2009) identified factors that can influence the experience of doctoral students in CES programs, including the level of support received from spouses. One participant stated that her doctoral program had "taken a toll on [her] intimate relationships" (Protivnak & Foss, 2009, p. 249). This study highlighted the importance of having a supportive and understanding partner, as well as the potential guilt experienced by students over placing doctoral work above other life obligations, such as family (Protivnak & Foss, 2009). The complications that may arise from doctoral study in CES programs for those students in intimate relationships are enough to warrant further study; however, there is a dearth of literature that exclusively addresses the phenomenon of married doctoral students in counseling. More specifically, the experience of married male CES students remains unexplored. As such, the current study sought to answer the following research question: What is the effect of marriage on the lived experience of male doctoral students in a CES program?

Method

This study used a qualitative approach based on transcendental phenomenology and Moustakas's (1994) adaptation of the van Kaam method. Creswell (2013) referred to this approach as the most practical and useful. The researcher utilized this approach because of its potential to

gather as much information about the participants as possible and encourage greater depth and detail in data collection (Patton, 2015).

Participants

The current study included four married male doctoral students in the same CACREP-accredited CES program in the mid-South. The researcher—who at the time was a doctoral student in the same program in which the study was conducted—utilized criterion-based selection (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Patton, 2015) to recruit participants. After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, he sent a letter to the university CES listserv requesting participants. He also utilized personal contacts within the CES program to identify students who met the inclusion criteria. Three participants were full-time students and were in the program between 1 and 2 years, while the fourth participant was a part-time student and had been in the program for 4 years. All participants matriculated immediately after completing their master's degrees in counseling. The ages of the participants ranged from 25 to 30 years ($n = 1$), 31 to 35 years ($n = 2$), and 36 to 40 years ($n = 1$). The mean length of marriage was 7.12 years ($SD = 1.71$). All participants had at least one child, and one participant had two children. Household incomes were in the ranges of 20-35k ($n = 1$), 35-50k ($n = 1$), 50-75k ($n = 1$), and 100k and above ($n = 1$). Although all four participants identified as White, race and ethnicity were not considerations in participant selection. Whether students were full or part-time and length of time in the CES program were also not part of the inclusion criteria, nor were students' age, the number of years married, household income, or number of children.

Data Collection

The research design for the current study incorporated three forms of data collection: individual interviews, critical incident reporting, and a focus group interview. The researcher

conducted all four individual interviews and the focus group interview. The individual interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes and followed a semi-structured format that used specific questions as a guide, yet allowed for unique and customized follow-up questions with each participant (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The formulation of questions was in part informed by existing literature on married graduate students and male students in higher education. After the completion of the individual interviews, participants completed one reflective writing task, or critical incident journal, per week for 6 weeks. The inclusion of critical incident reporting (Flanagan, 1954) helped in corroborating the interview data. It consisted of three writing prompts designed to highlight doctoral program-related interactions between the students and their spouses. The final method of data collection took the form of a 90-minute focus group interview. While focus group interviews are not traditionally part of phenomenological methods, they can help provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied and allow researchers to check their interpretation of the data (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2009). This focus group took place after data from the individual interviews and critical incident journals was collected and analyzed. See the Appendix for the list of questions used for all three sources of data collection for the current study.

Data Analysis

After interviews were transcribed, the researcher engaged in the process of *horizontalization,* an element of *Phenomenological Reduction* (Moustakas, 1994). Through this process, irrelevant or repetitive statements from the interview data were deleted, leaving the remaining statements as *horizons*, or *invariant constituents*. He then clustered the invariant constituents under thematic labels before organizing these themes into a coherent textural description (Moustakas, 1994) for each participant, followed by a composite description for the group. Next, in the process of *Imaginative Variation* (Moustakas, 1994), the researcher sought to

determine the structural description of an experience, or the underlying factors that account for the "how" of an experience that explains the "what." Similar to the textural descriptions, this was done both individually and collectively. The final step in the process was the integration of the textural and structural descriptions into narrative statements that captured the meaning and essence of the experience for each participant, and lastly, composite descriptions that condense the experiences of all participants involved. This final step is known as *Synthesis* (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

The researcher took several steps to ensure trustworthiness through the completion of the current study, focusing on the activities of prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The length of the individual interviews and focus group allowed for prolonged engagement to occur. The implementation of the critical incident journal for a 6-week period helped eliminate any distortions in data collection during the individual interviews, such as any misunderstanding of questions asked, or participants not being willing or able to answer questions fully at the time of their interviews. The researcher achieved persistent observation through in-depth, semi-structured interviewing, which allowed him to sort through participants' responses and follow-up with questions to achieve more depth in the areas that were relevant to the inquiry. He also used multiple data source triangulation (i.e., individual interviews, critical incident journals, focus group interview) to increase credibility and methodological rigor (Flynn et al., 2018) and peer debriefing to review the findings. The peer debriefer was a former doctoral student in the same CES program who is married and identifies as male. He received access to data from the participants and was instructed to review the thematic labels identified by the researcher.

During the focus group interview, the researcher shared the thematic labels with the participants for the purpose of member checking. Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to member checking as "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). This step prevented researcher bias from influencing the findings of the study. Finally, the researcher wrote a memo at the end of each interview. The memos contained elements of analytical and personal reflection, and they helped to maintain an awareness of issues related to personal bias and subjectivity. Collectively, these measures taken (i.e., peer debriefing, member checking, researcher memos) allowed for the participants' experiences to be bracketed as their own. This is a process known as *epochė* (Moustakas, 1994).

Findings

The researcher believes data saturation was reached. While individual differences among the participants were present, the data collected throughout the process generally had strong similarities and reached the point of "informational redundancy" (Sandelowski, 2008, p. 875). Moustakas (1994) suggested that the themes identified through the data analysis process (known as horizons or invariant constituents) be clustered into thematic labels. The researcher identified three thematic labels under which the participants' invariant constituents were organized: program-related benefits of marriage, program-related challenges of marriage, and household responsibilities.

Program-Related Benefits of Marriage

All participants from the current study acknowledged the support they received from their spouses as instrumental in their program-related success. This support was labeled under four different categories of emotional, financial, academic, and logistical. The categories of support are described below.

Emotional Support

Emotional support for the participants came in the form of encouragement, and the sense that their spouses were on their sides as they pursued their doctorates. The students also appreciated their spouses' support during times when they felt frustration over program-related matters. Their spouses allowed the students to vent in a safe environment and hear a different perspective on the issue. One participant referred to his spouse as his "partner in crime," and someone who could validate his feelings and make him feel "supported and heard." Another participant stated that he appreciated "having someone to lean on a little bit." Regarding emotional support, a third participant added, "I don't think I would've made it to this point if it wasn't for her support."

Financial Support

The students' spouses also provided financial support, which the researcher defined to include household budgeting in addition to providing income for the family. In the case of one participant, his spouse took on the role of primary earner in the household. Those students who were employed, thus, not looking to their spouses as the primary earners, still relied on their wives for financial support by means of managing the budget for the family. "She definitely handles the budget," one participant stated. "All the money stuff." Another student added, "She pays all the bills. I used to be on top of all that stuff, but I just don't have time anymore!"

Academic Support

Spouses also provided academic support in a variety of ways. This included proofreading assignments, helping with academic poster designs, and brainstorming ideas for research projects, including potential dissertation topics. One participant stated,

If I'm writing or making a poster presentation, she can show me what colors would work

well because I'm not good at that. She can be a set of eyes. She can proofread. She's a good

writer. She's a better writer than me.

Another participant added,

My wife reads my papers all the time. It's nice having her input, and I think it makes her

feel included. That's a good feeling for her because she really isn't included otherwise, and

I think she'd like to know more about what's going on at school.

Logistical Support

Logistical support from the doctoral students' spouses was noted through increased

household-related responsibilities, such as completing more chores in the home. Spouses also

supported the students by attending to errands that students may not have had time to complete

themselves. Among others, this included tasks such as grocery shopping and scheduling repairs

for the home. One participant reported, "My wife can take care of stuff when I'm busy. If I have

to be gone for the day, she can help with whatever the house stuff is." Another participant stated,

"Now that I've started internship, I can't go pick up the kids from school like I used to. She's been

great about doing that."

Program-Related Challenges of Marriage

The participants in the current study also reported program-related challenges in their

marriages. The common challenges of being married while in the CES doctoral program primarily

pertained to time management and the balancing of multiple roles. These challenges are described

below in more detail.

Time Management

The biggest challenged faced by the married doctoral students who took part in this study was the issue of time, or lack thereof. All four participants referenced the challenge of being able to complete their program-related tasks while still allocating time to spend with their families. Due to the time commitment required, one participant referred to the doctoral program as "like having a second spouse." He added,

> When you're dating [your time commitment] changes, when you're married it changes, and when you have a kid, it definitely changes! Being in the program just makes that all worse because it's such a big time commitment too. I'm just glad [classes] are mostly during the day though. That makes things a little easier.

Another participant stated,

> This is PhD school, so it takes time. So when I go to school during the day, I have to study or do work or whatever, so I'll go up to the Union maybe, and I just get in the corner somewhere and just do work. And we have a three-year-old at home, so it's just difficult managing my school work. Now with my internship, it's just a lot crazier too.

The students reported engaging in various strategies to help them manage their time accordingly. One participant, for example, reported refraining from doing any program-related work on the weekends or on weeknights before his children went to bed. Another reported choosing to do much of his work late at night as well, once his wife and child were already asleep, as well as using "a very detailed calendar." A third participant reported that he chooses to work early in the morning instead by blocking off time on Monday and Saturday mornings to work on his dissertation proposal.

Another commonality among the students was a lack of time to engage in self-care. One participant reported being an avid runner yet struggled to carve out time to run on the weekends, which is the best time for him to do so. A second participant enjoyed golfing, but stated he was limited in the time he could spend on the course. Sharing his account of the end of the semester and its impact on his relationship, the participant stated,

> I was not able to have time for self-care, or really be intentional with our time together given the stress I was carrying. Looking back, I wish I would've allowed time for self-care and to spend more time with my spouse, but at the same time, finals took every bit of that week that I was not at work or in class.

Role Balance

Closely linked to the issue of time, and time management, is the challenge of balancing roles. The participants identified with several roles including student, husband, father, counselor, supervisor, trainer, and community member. The students often were required to choose what role to focus on throughout their days at the expense of other roles. For example, one participant discussed having a 45-minute window twice a week to tend to either household chores or studying, and he often chose to study. All four participants in the current study had young children, with two participants having their first children after they matriculated. Based on the data, balancing the roles between student and father appears challenging, and seemingly more difficult than the transitions between student and spouse. Said one participant, "Adding a kid to your marriage is harder than adding a PhD!"

All four students reported making family a priority over other roles. One participant admitted to having missed class on one occasion because he had not spent enough time with his daughter recently, while another referred to moving from one role to another as "a giant juggling

act," but claimed to be "fully present" regardless of his role at the time. This can be a struggle for some. One participant reported believing he thinks about school too often, even during times when he is with his family. Another student stated that during stressful periods, he is "all over the place" when it comes to where he focuses his thoughts leading to moments of forgetfulness. He added,

> Sometimes I forget about things that are coming up, or things I need to be aware of or prepare for, and things like that. I'm generally a pretty low stress person, but when stress does hit, it makes it a little tougher to be present-minded. Things start to get a little foggy, and I have to go back and wonder if I've missed something.

 In most cases, the students managed their roles by setting aside specific times to attend to program-related tasks or to spend time with family, but this is a constant struggle. One participant stated,

> As soon as [my wife and daughter] wake up, I have to stop [my academic work], and I want to stop. I have to go meet with them. I would say that's a challenge though because it's like, how do I carve out time without taking more time from the people I care about? I don't want to make them feel less important than the PhD, but at the same time, it has to get done, so that's a challenge.

Designated TV and movie nights were common practice to intentionally increase family time, as was tending to schoolwork while their families slept. On occasions when program-related functions interfered with scheduled family time, students felt guilty about their choices. The participants all agreed, though, that they wish their families could be more involved in school functions, but there were not many opportunities offered. "We'd for sure go to picnics or get-togethers as a family, but the only one that was scheduled—we just couldn't make that one," stated a participant. Even social gatherings that were not program-organized were difficult to attend due to childcare costs. One participant reported,

We're not going to bring the kids if another couple asks us out. We're just not going to do that. But when you start looking at babysitting costs, it like doubles the cost of the whole night when you factor in dinner or whatever else.

Household Responsibilities

Participants in the study reported that they evenly distributed household-related tasks and chores as much as possible, and therefore, mostly disregarded traditional gender roles in their homes. One participant stated, "I don't want to be a stereotypical male; that's just not what I want to do." All took part in, or were fully responsible for, cooking, cleaning, vacuuming, and doing laundry. They also reportedly engaged in childcare duties, such as changing diapers and nighttime routines. As an enduring stereotypical role, however, there also seemed to be a shared sense of urgency to provide for their families. One participant reported "pressure to continue to make money," while another admitted to feeling shame about the fact that his wife is the primary earner, while he is unemployed. A third participant stated that his wife "has very low expectations" in terms of his financial contributions while in the doctoral program, but that he "can't help but feel inadequate in some ways."

Discussion

Despite an increase in studies that focus on wellness of counseling students (Lawson, 2007), few have focused exclusively on doctoral students in CES programs (Perpiczka & Balkin, 2010). For those studies that do exist, a common theme appears to be that students' personal lives, including partner relationships, play a role in their academic experiences and are important factors in their overall achievement and well-being (Perpiczka & Balkin, 2010; Sverdlik et al., 2018). To the authors' knowledge, the current study is the first to explore the experience of a CES program from males' perspectives, and by extension, the first study on the experience of married males in

the field. While the authors acknowledge that some of the findings may be applicable to all CES students regardless of gender, we believe that males' decreasing presence in a female-dominated occupation (Schweiger et al., 2012), in conjunction with the call for increased male recruitment strategies in the field (Michel et al., 2013), were ample reasons for a male-focused inquiry.

The findings reveal that the main benefits of being married while in a doctoral program for the males in this study revolve around the concept of support. This support is often crucial to their retention and successful completion of the degree. The participants in this study reported feeling supported in many forms, including emotionally, financially, academically, and logistically. These themes coincide with those outlined by Giles (1983), and more recently, with the findings from Murray and Kleist (2011), who labeled support as emotional, financial, and task-oriented, as well as Crockett et al. (2018) who identified relational support as an element of students' success. While all forms of support are important, emotional support stands alone as the most beneficial. Married male doctoral students rely on their spouses for praise and validation in response to accomplishments, along with encouragement and a listening ear during periods of frustration.

Financial support is a close second in terms of importance. While funding concerns are a major source of anxiety for all doctoral students (Kurtz-Costes et al., 2006; Sverdilk et al., 2018), male students share a greater concern regarding finances than female students (Gold, 2006). Doctoral students may hold jobs or graduate assistantships during their time in the program, but the academic demands typically prevent students from working full-time jobs. In the current study, one participant did work full-time, acting as the only exception to this norm. The consequences of this resulted in a prolonged progression through the program. Thus, it is more common for students to work part-time, or not at all, while their spouses are responsible for the majority of the income. This is the preferred approach if completing the doctoral program in the shortest amount of time

is a shared goal within couples. Male doctoral students may feel guilty or inadequate for not being able to contribute financially to their households, however. They may also feel more pressure than female students to succeed in their programs as quickly as possible so that they may provide for their families (Cao, 2001). Unfortunately, they do not always communicate this pressure with their spouses. Some male students may prefer to compartmentalize school-related concerns to protect their spouses' feelings or because of a "9/5 orientation" (McQuillan & Foote, 2007, p. 25) associated with a traditional workplace, in which they keep their school and home lives separate from each other.

While the pressure to provide exists, and is likely based on traditional gender socialization roles, the data suggests that male doctoral students and their spouses have shifted to a more egalitarian way of living within their households. Males, in general, contribute more to tasks at home, such as cooking, cleaning, and child care than in previous generations (Aumann et al., 2011; Bianchi et al., 2006; Livingston & Parker, 2019). These changes are occurring despite a recent study that suggests that breaking away from traditional gender socialization roles can have a negative impact on male students' psychological well-being (Cole et al., 2019). While an egalitarian arrangement is helpful for student marriages in terms of developing a more even distribution of chores in the home, it can also add to the strain on male students to fulfill not only school responsibilities, but those within their households as well. Aumann et al. (2011) coined this *the new male mystique*, in which men feel the pressure to be the financial provider while also being more involved as a husband and father.

As previously stated, CES students are involved in multiple roles and relationships (Dickens et al., 2016). Thus, married CES doctoral students feel challenged in meeting the demands across several roles, which often results in failure in one role, or falling short across all

roles. Whether it be a component of time, or mental strain, in which students' are too worn down by one role to effectively handle another, role management is the most pressing challenge facing married male doctoral students. Similar effects are seen in other demanding fields of study as well. In their exploration of married students in law school, McQuillan and Foote (2008) noted that a component of *school-to-marriage spillover* is students feeling overwhelmed by the competing demands of school and home life. One can view the notion of time management as related to roles. Doctoral students require more time to fulfill their duties from one role to the next, whether it be preparing for a statistics exam or spending time with their families.

These challenges described above become amplified with the added responsibility of children. Consequently, when children are part of the equation, role management becomes yet a more harrowing task. While this phenomenon has been explored through the lens of female CES students (Holm et al., 2015; Pierce & Herlily, 2013; Trepal et al., 2014), male CES students' experiences of fatherhood had to this point remained untouched. All students involved in this study had young children, and while they admitted the demands of the CES doctoral program were challenging, the presence of children was the factor that truly made balancing roles problematic.

Implications for Prospective and Current Doctoral Students

While there may be some advantages to being a male in a CES program, many male students may experience gender-specific barriers that can negatively affect their success (Crockett et al., 2018; Michel et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important that those considering the pursuit of a doctoral program are aware of the unique challenges and risks that doctoral study can cause within their marriages and families. Prospective students should take time to carefully research different types of doctoral programs and the accompanying expectations and consider time management, which includes self-care and time with partners and family. Males, especially those who hold

traditional gender roles or may be prone to guilt or feelings of inadequacy for not providing financially for their families, should evaluate their views of their roles in their familial relationships and include their partners in the decision-making process as they evaluate program requirements and ways to accommodate the potential changes to their family dynamics.

Regardless of gender, current doctoral students must be aware of the challenges and changes associated with doctoral programs. They should regularly include their spouses in program-related discussion as well (McQuillan & Foote, 2007). Students must also recognize the demands on their time due to increased roles and responsibilities and develop a structure that works for them and their spouses. This might include reducing their course load if needed or seeking outside help with household chores. Labosier and Labosier (2011) posited that there should be no fixed roles while in the household, and that couples simply do what they can around the house as time permits. This approach is contrary to traditional gender socialization roles in which men gauge their adequacy based on their ability to meet male gender norms, such as providing for their families and not focusing on shared household responsibilities (Cole et al., 2019). The authors' view is that it may be necessary for doctoral students, as with counselors and counselor educators, to compromise their academic or professional roles on occasion and focus on the needs of their relationships to maintain wellness and balance.

CES students should also seek those faculty who offer holistic supervision in terms of addressing both the personal and professional aspects and how they impact one another. This may mean that students are also referred to obtain individual, marriage, or family counseling to help them manage the stressors indicated in this study, such as household responsibilities and the role management required to be successful in both their families and their CES program.

Implications for Counselor Education Programs

Counselor educators should not ignore the effects personal issues have on students' ability to succeed in their programs (Burkholder, 2012). If students are distracted due to personal or family matters, they are less able to devote the necessary attention to fulfilling the demands of the program. This can lead to incompletion of their program or not entering the field at all. Due to the relational nature of the field, counselor educators should make a concerted effort to engage with doctoral students and discuss the implications of the program on their families. Michel et al. (2013) explored the impact of males in counseling programs with an aim of improving recruitment methods for male students, but little research has been published since then to understand the experience of males in female-dominated training programs, particularly related to recruitment and retention.

For male students, who may be on the receiving end of a gender bias from faculty as a result of perceived privilege (Michel et al., 2015), it becomes paramount that educators take notice of male students' unique needs. Counseling faculty should also be cautious against viewing male students as the token minority in a female-dominated profession (Michel et al., 2015). Counselor educators could also assign reflection papers as assignments, in which students address their own relationships and any new awareness they may encounter, and use clinical supervision as a time to address personal relationships and their impact on students (Murray & Kleist, 2011). Clinical supervision can serve as a way of promoting wellness, while simultaneously modeling effective supervision in which the holistic needs of CES students are addressed. Outside counseling should also be suggested in order to maintain appropriate supervision boundaries if more time is needed to process the stressors. Whether a part of clinical supervision or in the classroom, counselor educators should encourage open communication from doctoral students to share with them

personal issues that may interfere with students' abilities to persist in their programs (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005). Providing opportunities for open communication can serve as an aid in reducing student attrition (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005), and therefore, improve students' chances for successful completion of their programs.

The findings suggest that CES programs should consider offering primarily daytime classes for doctoral students. The courses offered at the university where this study was conducted are during the day, but many other CES programs advertise as having evening courses geared toward working professionals. This arrangement is not beneficial for students with families. If both students and their spouses work during the day, and students are in class in the evenings, time spent as couples is severely compromised. Though not part of the inclusion criteria for this study, all participants were also parents. For doctoral students with children, evening classes limit the quality time students can spend with their kids as well. The authors suggest that CES programs seek out opportunities to host family-friendly social events when possible. In between events, programs with Chi Sigma Iota chapters should encourage chapter members to organize and sponsor childcare opportunities, so married students with children can enjoy time together. Lastly, to support married doctoral students in helping their spouses feel more included, CES programs should consider offering a family orientation night, in which the structure and requirements of the program are disseminated.

Though not directly linked to the findings, the authors also believe CES programs should consider moving toward a cohort model due to the added benefit of peer support (Miller & Irby, 1999; Pederson & Daniels, 2001). Devine (2012) identified a theme of accompaniment in a CES program, along with the appreciation cohort members had for having "co-travelers on the journey through the program" (p. 294). The literature posits that males form their closest bonds when

involved in the same activities (Greif, 2009). This is especially true during an activity that requires intense engagement, such as athletic competition, military service, and school (Dunbar, 2018). Thus, the added support and camaraderie a cohort model can provide may be of particular importance for male students. CES programs could also develop formal writing or research groups for their students so cohort members could remain connected through the dissertation process. This type of support would likely benefit married male doctoral students, and by extension, their spouses as well.

Limitations and Future Research

The research design used in this study was not without its limitations, such as the means chosen for data collection. Individual interviews pose a risk that participants will respond in the way they believe the researcher would prefer, or that the researcher may not have taken enough time to develop rapport with the participants (Fontana & Frey, 2003). With focus groups, the possibility for groupthink exists (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016), and the researcher must be skilled in balancing collecting data with facilitating meaningful conversation (Fontana & Frey, 2003). Another limitation is the length of the data collection period. Studying this phenomenon longitudinally over the course of the students' programs would have likely produced richer results. In addition, an increased number of participants, and including participants from more diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, as well as students in same-sex relationships, may have enriched the findings. Lastly, because the data indicates that part-time versus full-time student status, as well as having children, have a considerable impact on students' experiences, including these variables as part of the inclusion criteria may have helped with delineating the data.

The findings of this study have highlighted several directions for future research. It would be beneficial to compare married male students to other groups, such as single male doctoral students, and married and single female doctoral students. Couples who are in long-term relationships, but not married, should also be considered, as should couples in same-sex marriages or long-term relationships. Other variables to consider are students' ages, length of marriage or relationship, financial health, and whether relocation was necessary to begin the program. Lastly, because the current study addresses the lived experience of male doctoral students, many of whom have an interest in pursuing a career in academia, exploring the lived experience of students as they transition into the ranks of the professoriate may be beneficial. This would allow for exploration of areas including socialization, professional identity development, and the career span of the married male CES student. This research also allows for collaboration with other areas of focus, such as gender studies in higher education.

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Appendix

Data Collection Questions

Individual Interview Questions
- What are the benefits of being a married doctoral student in counselor education?
    - How does being a male affect this, if at all?
- What are the challenges of being a married doctoral student in counselor education?
    - How does being a male affect this, if at all?
- How, if at all, has your marriage changed since you began the doctoral program?
- How do you split your time between school and home responsibilities?
- How much time would you say you spend thinking about school compared to home or other responsibilities?
- How do you divide household responsibilities?
    - How is this different from when you began the program?
    - How does being a male affect this, if at all?

Critical Incident Report Writing Prompts
- In reflecting on the past week, please recall an interaction with your spouse that was affected by the doctoral program in either a positive or a negative way.

- In 1-2 short paragraphs, please describe the interaction:
    - What occurred?
    - What were your thoughts and feelings as a result of the interaction?
    - What was the outcome of the interaction? (What was the resolution?)

Focus Group Questions
- What was it like for you to complete the weekly journal entries?
- What, if any, changes did you notice about yourself during this process?
- How, if at all, did your feelings about your spouse change during this process?
- Do you feel that the themes accurately describe your experience as a married male doctoral student in the counselor education program at [this university]? Why or why not?