ABSTRACT

BRANDT, ADAM HALL. Jesus Take the Wheel: Experiences of White Post-Evangelical Christian Students' Faith Disorientation in Counselor Education. (Under the direction of Dr. Adria Dunbar).

This research study is a qualitative multi-case study design investigating the experiences of White post-evangelical Christian students' faith disorientation in counselor education programs. The purpose of this study is to explore how white evangelical culture impacts students' faith and multicultural development throughout their CACREP-accredited counseling program. Research suggests counseling programs do not adequately prepare students in developing their spiritual competencies, and because white evangelical culture exists in tension with counselor/multicultural ethics, students socialized by evangelicalism may face friction between their faith background and developing counselor identity. Furthermore, this study addresses a gap in the counseling literature concerning the intersection of evangelicalism, faith development, and multicultural development. Through semi-structured interviews, this study thematically analyzes developmental faith experiences of White post-evangelical Christian students in counselor education. The results suggest the participants experienced faith disorientation surrounding their religious beliefs as well as their social circles in faith and counseling communities. Many of them found resolution through mentor support, spiritual expansiveness and inclusion, and their fidelity to sound counseling practice. Understanding these dynamics as it relates to counselor education programs can help counselor educators continue to support the faith and multicultural development of White evangelical and post-evangelical Christian students and the clients they serve.

Jesus Take the Wheel: Experiences of White Post-Evangelical Christian Students' Faith Disorientation in Counselor Education

by
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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Educational Leadership, Policy, and Human Development

Raleigh, North Carolina

2022

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Biography

Adam Brandt is a licensed psychotherapist in Raleigh, North Carolina. He holds a master's in clinical mental health counseling from the University of Dayton and a doctorate in counseling and counselor education from North Carolina State University. Adam specializes in working with teenagers, college students, and adults through life transitions, identity development, existential and religious concerns, family relationships, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). In practice, he draws upon acceptance and commitment therapy, existential psychotherapy, exposure and response prevention for clients with OCD, and Buddhist psychology. Through these theoretical orientations, Adam's disposition around mental health is that a healthy mind is not the absence of emotional distress, but the ability to meet all emotions with compassion and acceptance while committing to one's values.

Outside of his practice, his research interests include Buddhist psychology and the intersection of faith and multicultural development in counselor education. He has published articles in Psychology Today and Psychotherapy.net, and he regularly presents his research at state-wide and national counseling conferences.

In his free time, Adam enjoys hiking, seeing national parks, playing music, watching sad movies, perfecting his morning ritual (making coffee), trying out new restaurants and breweries, listening to all the *This American Life* podcasts, reading, and trying to be a better guitar player.

Acknowledgments

Writing this dissertation has been the most challenging and enjoyable part of my doctoral program. Of course, the academic rigor of writing a dissertation is daunting, but perhaps the hardest part was mustering up the courage to write a dissertation on evangelicalism. This took a considerable amount of effort because I'm an enneagram 9 and avoid conflict. I have many close evangelical friends and family whom I love and respect, and I wish to continue these mutually beneficial relationships. So finding a path that allowed me to critically examine evangelicalism or evangelical culture while still loving the individual evangelicals I know (many of whom are not aligned with evangelical culture) was a delicate process. I found this delineation between critiquing a cultural system (evangelicalism) while loving the individuals (evangelicals) helpful in moving through this research. I hope the readers can understand the places where they intersect and differentiate as they read through this dissertation.

That being said, I would like to thank several influential people for helping me along this process. Not all these folks may agree with all my research conclusions. Nuanced discussion with points of contention and alternative considerations is a given in any academic discussion, and I don't seek total agreement in my relationships. I gravitate toward curious people who are imaginative in their thinking. The following people have been all those things for me and more, and I have so much gratitude for them.

I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Drs. Adria Dunbar, Peter Hessling, Marc Grimmett, and Alyssa Rockenbach. You all are rock star scholars and teachers. Thank you, Dr. Hessling, for introducing me to qualitative research, for your enthusiasm in class, individual support for students, and attention to detail in this research. Thank you, Dr. Rockenbach, for your continued support by reminding me how important this research is and for your wealth of knowledge concerning faith development and advocacy for marginalized communities. Thank you, Dr. Grimmett, for deepening my multicultural development. Your advanced multicultural

course challenged me not to make multiculturalism an academic exercise or an auxiliary discipline, but to make it relational and foundational to the work we do as counselors.

Dr. Dunbar, I am so glad you were my chair and advisor through this process. I highly doubt I would have completed my degree in my desired time frame without your support, strategic thinking, and responsiveness. Thank you for watching out for me, giving me space to research what I am passionate about, fine-tuning the areas of this study that needed work, and being a dependable person I could turn to for support and guidance. I feel very fortunate to have you at the helm of this process.

I'd also like to thank three folks from my master's program at the University of Dayton, Drs. Alan Demmitt, Scott Hall, and Erin Shiner. You all were and continue to be a huge part of my counseling and faith development. I met you all at a time when I needed folks to model what that faith and counseling development looks like, and I am extremely fortunate to have two professors and a supervisor show me what that looks like from a Marianist disposition.

I want to thank a few religious, multicultural, and historical scholars, journalists, and leaders to whom I have no personal connection but nonetheless heavily shaped my study, thinking, and faith/multicultural development. These people include Richard Rohr, OFM; Pete Enns, PhD; Rachel Held Evans; Kristin Du Mez, PhD; Robert P. Jones, PhD; Robin DiAngelo, PhD; and Frances FitzGerald.

Finally, I'd like to thank my friends and family. I have a handful of close cousins, friends, and siblings who have all been incredible sources of support and have seen all the highs and lows of me moving through my 6 years of graduate school. Thanks, Mom and Dad, for cheering me on over the years and for talking through all the critical junctures of my student decisions and life paths with encouragement and grace. Thanks, Grandma and Grandpa Thomas, for your endless support and for housing me at the tail end of my master's program.

You all are the best community I could ask for.

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Chapter I: Introduction

In 1975, John Kavanaugh, a Jesuit ethicist, visited Calcutta, India, to partake in a "long experiment of humble ministry," which is a Jesuit tradition taken in their last year of formation. During his time at the House of Dying—a hospice established by Saint Mother Teresa—he had several conversations with Mother Teresa. According to Kavanaugh, two of these conversations profoundly impacted his life. In their first conversation, Kavanaugh had concerns about moving back to his life of comfort and wealth as a university professor in America. Mother Teresa advised him to go back, saying, "There is far greater poverty there. The greatest poverty is the absence of love." They had their second conversation just before he left Calcutta. Kavanaugh asked her to pray "for clarity." Surprisingly, she refused, and Kavanaugh protested that she "always seemed to have clarity and certitude." Mother Teresa said, "I've never had clarity and certitude." She continued, "Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of" (Kavanaugh, 2007; Manning, 2002).

After Mother Teresa died, she was canonized and became Saint Teresa of Calcutta. In her letters to her spiritual directors, she said that if she became a saint, she would be one of "darkness" (Teresa & Kolodiejchuk, 2007). Saint Teresa often wrote of her spiritual darkness and of feeling God's absence in her life. By her own account, her spiritual disorientation started shortly after she placed herself in a new and unfamiliar context in her work alongside the "poorest of the poor." Although she did not seem to receive any respite from spiritual darkness or doubt, she apparently came to accept it through an arresting orthopraxy of faith tethered to her work alongside marginalized people; to her, they were all reincarnated reflections of Christ. In many ways, Saint Teresa's relationship with India's most vulnerable people liberated her from one kind of faith to another, which although filled with uncertainty, was marked by deep mysticism, radical fortitude, and universal compassion.

Just as Saint Teresa experienced faith disorientation shortly after experiencing a new cultural context, students impacted by white evangelical culture will likely encounter their own type of faith disorientation as they learn, counsel, and exist in new multicultural contexts. Through this qualitative research, I am attempting to investigate faith disorientation, a specific kind of spiritual nebulousness or uncertainty, in the lived experience of White post-evangelical Christian counselors. I am operationalizing faith disorientation by defining it as a state of uncertainty and/or lostness in how faith, or one's ultimate concern or form of meaning, fits within an unfamiliar context. Using this definition, faith disorientation may cause people to question, abandon, rework, and/or fortify faith values and the application of those values to resolve cognitive dissonance, integrate new ideas, and/or accept uncertainty.

According to the literature, white evangelical culture has, to varying degrees, implicitly and explicitly stood in opposition to the freedom of women, LGBTQ people, and People of Color, especially Black people (Du Mez, 2020; Jones, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017). Although these oppressive forces are not unique to white evangelicalism, they are distinctive in how they manifest in white evangelicalism through their culture, celebrity, politics, theology, and flavor of biblical epistemology (Du Mez, 2020; Jones, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017). In addition, a significant portion of white evangelical history exists in direct tension with the American Counseling Association's (ACA) *Code of Ethics,* particularly its focus on multicultural counseling ethics (ACA, 2014; Kaplan et al., 2017; Smith & Okech, 2016). Furthermore, students highly influenced by white evangelical culture may feel disorientation within their faith as they begin to grapple with the value incongruence between counseling ethics and the values of white evangelical culture (Fowler, 1981; Smith & Okech, 2016). Unfortunately, the literature suggests counseling programs generally do not adequately equip students with spiritual competencies or an understanding of spirituality within a multicultural framework (Johns, 2017; Henriksen et al., 2015; Adams, 2012; Robertson, 2010; Saussaye, 2012). Furthermore, White evangelicals are likely to view higher education as a hostile environment for fostering faith development, which

could hinder some White evangelical students and/or post-evangelical students to trust in colleagues and counselor educators as they experience faith disorientation and work toward resolution (Moran et al., 2007).

Theoretical Framework

Fowler's (1981) faith development theory, *Stages of Faith*, serves as an analytical framework to understand how people move or become stagnant in their faith development process. *Stages of Faith* also conceptualizes how relationships, environmental changes, and sociopolitical events often catalyze the transition from one faith stage to another as one's awareness and framework must adapt to address the disorientation new perspectives bring. Fowler posits faith development as having six stages with a trajectory that moves toward a more complex multicultural perspective, compassionate action, moral understanding, and sophisticated spiritual depth at each level.

As an analytical tool, Fowler's theory helps ideate narratives and qualitative data surrounding faith by placing that data into developmental stages and processes. The stages also provide a clear common goal of understanding multiple perspectives and positionality, universal compassion (in belief and practice), connection to community, critical interrogation of one's own beliefs, cultural humility, and comfort with ambiguity and paradox.

Stages of Faith is relevant to White evangelical or post-evangelical Christian counseling students for several reasons. First, the sample of participants Fowler used to construct his faith development theory was largely normed after a White, Judeo-Christian demographic, and white evangelicalism is situated within this demographic. Furthermore, Fowler's faith stages are partially hinged on multicultural development—meaning these two processes happen in tandem. Therefore, as students impacted by white evangelical culture learn how to develop multicultural counseling skills as required by The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) and the American Counseling Association (ACA), they may be confronted with new opportunities to advance their faith development by developing multicultural

awareness (Smith & Okech, 2016). In this way, faith development and multicultural development are inseparable. Additionally, according to Fowler's theory, faith disorientation is a necessary part of faith development, which means the uncertainty or feeling of lostness is normal and a precursor to advancing to higher faith stages. Finally, as noted earlier, students who grew up in an evangelical culture or once identified as evangelical are likely to reach this faith disorientation within their program as their white evangelical culture begins to intersect and confront counseling and multicultural ethics.

Gap in the Literature

In searching across the counseling and mental health academic journals, no academic articles discuss white evangelical culture and its impact on Christian counseling students and their faith development. Although a substantial amount of literature discusses the importance of multicultural development among Christians, especially conservative Christians, most of this literature's multicultural and ethical foci are on LGBTQ concerns and abortion. There is also a dearth of literature investigating evangelical students or the interaction of race and faith development. However, evangelicals are not necessarily synonymous with conservative Christians. Although evangelicals are often, but not always, conservative politically and socially, they have distinct theological, cultural, and historical differences from other conservative Protestants and Catholics (FitzGerald, 2017). Finally, the literature highlighting ethical and multicultural development among Christian identifying counselors (not to be confused with "Christian counselors" as a type of counseling practice) generally focuses on the process by which Christians develop their multicultural competencies and not the process by which Christians develop their faith. Although this research is essential, understanding how their *faith is experienced* alongside their multicultural development is equally crucial to understanding the entirety of their experience and development, but it is missing from the literature.

Purpose of the Study and Statement of the Problem

As mentioned earlier, white evangelical culture exists in tension with the ACA *Code of Ethics* and CACREP standards surrounding multicultural development. As a result, counseling students socialized by white evangelical culture will likely face misalignment between their socialization and the ethical competencies they are required to develop in a CACREP-accredited program. This misalignment may cause faith disorientation and require these students to make adjustments (either by fortification, reconstruction, or abandonment) to their faith as they progress through their program. How these adjustments resolve or do not resolve this disorientation will consequently impact their multicultural development and therapeutic relationship with their clients, especially those adversely affected by white evangelical culture.

The purpose of this study is to understand how post-evangelical White Christian counselors experience faith disorientation in their counseling program across the continuum of personal identification or non-identification with evangelicalism. In other words, I am interested in the stories current post-evangelical White Christian counselors tell about their faith development as they reflect on their graduate training, regardless of their level of identification with evangelicalism during their schooling. White Christian counseling students may be at various stages in their evangelical identity or abandonment of this identity, but they all carry a shared cultural history and socialization, impacting their faith development and feelings of faith disorientation. Therefore, this research explores the narratives of post-evangelical White Christian counselors as they reflect on their experience with faith disorientation in their CACREP-accredited program.

Although this research focuses on post-evangelical Christian counselors, this does not imply that this specific identity evolution is the prescriptive path to higher levels of faith and multicultural development. Some evangelicals may reject evangelicalism/evangelical culture and retain their evangelical identity; further examination of this phenomenon will be elucidated in the discussion of this research. Additionally, some post-evangelical counselors shed their Christian

identity and move to a completely different faith system. These two populations (non-Christian post-evangelicals and evangelicals who reject evangelicalism/evangelical culture) are equally as important to explore and learn from. However, Christian post-evangelicals, non-Christian post-evangelicals, and evangelicals who reject their evangelical culture are three distinct populations, and each has a unique faith trajectory. Because of these differences and my interests formed through my positionality, my primary focus is on White Christian post-evangelical counselors and their stories.

Research Questions

In Chapter III, I will discuss how my research focus shifted after facilitating a pilot study. My pilot study informed and reformulated how to structure my research surrounding the phenomena of white evangelical culture and its impact on students in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. Because I led with a pilot study, which informed structural changes to my overall purpose and design moving forward, I have one research agenda and question for the pilot study from which I created the main research question that drives the rest of this study.

<u>Pilot study research question:</u> What factors influence White evangelicals to enroll in CACREP-accredited counseling programs at secular institutions?

<u>Main research question:</u> How do White post-evangelical Christian counselors experience faith disorientation and/or resolution while enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counseling program?

Need for the Study

As mentioned earlier, there is a paucity of research on white evangelical culture and how it impacts counselors and their faith development process in counselor education. This dissertation adds to the literature and addresses the spiritual wellness concerns for developing counselors and clients they serve. The results of this study will give counselor educators a better understanding of the stories of students shaped by white evangelical culture, not to generalize across all this population of students, but to start a discussion and inquiry into a phenomenon of white evangelical culture's impact on student faith development within

counselor education programs. Through this understanding, counselor educators may learn to anticipate and support their multicultural development in tandem with their faith development. Additionally, current White evangelical students may come to a greater understanding of how their culture impacts their understanding of faith and their relationship to oppressed/marginalized people, which may help develop more cultural humility and multicultural awareness across their counseling practice. In doing so, they may begin to develop their faith, as Saint Teresa did, by holding their theology in a posture of humility and embracing a radical orthopraxy of universal compassion. Furthermore, clients struggling through their faith development and/or holding marginalized identities, especially those negatively impacted by white evangelical culture, will indirectly benefit from the implications of this research as more counselors learn to be a liberatory force for their clients rather than an oppressive barrier in the clients' mental and emotional wellbeing.

Definition of Terms

Faith: A communal allegiance to a set of values and ultimate concern.

Faith disorientation: A state of uncertainty and/or lostness in how faith fits within an unfamiliar context.

Evangelical: A subset of Christian Protestantism based on the Bebbington quadrilateral and often identifying as "born again."

"Born again": A biblical phrase used by evangelicals that typically refers to a salvation experience as a form of spiritual rebirth and the beginning of a "personal relationship with Christ" at a specific point in time.

Protestant: Any Christian individual or denomination not a part of the Catholic church or identifying as Catholic.

Bebbington quadrilateral: Four statements of faith historically agreed upon by evangelicals:

- Biblicism: A high regard for the Bible as one's ultimate authority.
- Activism: Sharing the gospel through ministry and social reform efforts.

- Crucicentrism: Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the sacrifice that removes the penalty of sin and offers redemption to humanity.
- Conversionism: People need to be transformed through a "born-again" experience and follow Jesus.

Biblical inerrancy: A late 19th-century doctrine developed by A.A. Hodge and B.B. Warfield's which assumes the Bible is without error–meaning the historical accounts in the original texts are historically accurate, and the biblical authors of the original text communicate a cohesive theological message.

Complementarianism: A theological belief that God created men and women with distinct gender roles and purposes which support patriarchy in both heterosexual marriage and the church.

White supremacy: A conscious or subconscious racial hierarchy whereby White people are placed at the apex of superiority and often covertly manifested in laws, practices, systems, theology, and socialization, which privileges White people while denying its elusive presence and impact.

Organization of the Study

Chapter II of this dissertation includes a literature review about religion and spirituality in counseling programs and the profession, Fowler's *Stages Faith*, and white evangelical culture and its implications on faith development. This literature review covers the history of spiritual/religious integration within the counseling profession as well as the current spiritual/religious dynamics and gaps existing in CACREP programs, state laws, and counseling ethics. Proceeding this section, I provide a more thorough review of Fowler's faith development theory and its relationship to multiculturalism. Additionally, I offer a detailed overview of white evangelical culture in relation to race, gender, sexuality, American politics and cultural movements, and theology. Finally, I review white evangelical culture's relevance to White Christian counseling students coming from evangelical backgrounds and their developmental

learning/practice, along with the perceptions White evangelicals may have of higher education at secular institutions. Chapter III discusses my pilot study and results, how my pilot study informed my primary research focus, and followed by my foundational research question and methodology. Chapter IV reports the qualitative data, and Chapter V includes a discussion of implications, research limitations, and future considerations for counseling research and practice.

Chapter II - Literature Review

Inclusion of Religion and Spirituality in Counselor Education

Although religion and spirituality are integral parts of the wellness model identified in counseling literature, counselor education programs often overlook how religion and spirituality impact the counselor, client, and their therapeutic alliance (Meyers et al., 2000; Johns, 2017; Henriksen et al., 2015). A significant amount of research suggests counselors are not adequately equipped to handle clients' spiritual/religious concerns in counseling, and counselors may not have the level of faith development required to ethically handle value-laden conversations with clients who have a differing view (e.g., Johns, 2017; Henriksen et al., 2015; Adams, 2012; Robertson, 2010; Saussaye, 2012). According to survey data, 56% of counseling students across the nation (*n* = 662) reported that they were not prepared to address clients' spiritual or religious concerns (i.e., existential questions about identity, divinity, relationship to God, and self-transcendence) (Robertson, 2010). Perhaps even more concerning is the faulty information counseling students learn about addressing spiritual concerns with clients. Adams (2012) found that 39.8% of counseling students believed they were taught explicitly or implicitly that it is unethical to address spiritual concerns with clients. This understanding contrasts sharply with the American Counseling Association's (ACA) *Code of Ethics* (2014), which requires counselors to work from the client's values worldview, which could include spirituality. Furthermore, qualitative research suggests counselor education faculty are reluctant to discuss religion/spirituality in classes for fear of marginalization from colleagues, past traumatic interpersonal conflicts surrounding religious topics, a lack of confidence discussing religion, insecurity surrounding their religious journey, self-protection from student evaluations, and protecting students' views/reputations by not discussing emotionally charged topics (Johns, 2017).

Historical Perspective of Spirituality and Religion in Counseling

Understanding the historical shifts within the counseling profession will help demystify why spiritual and religious competencies are not adequately addressed in counseling programs. Although spirituality and religion are not well integrated into counseling programs, the counseling profession has made significant strides in recent years. For example, before the ACA updated its *Code of* Ethics in 2014, counselors were taught to refer clients to clergy for any religious or spiritual concerns (Powers, 2005). To understand psychotherapy's evolving relationship with spirituality/religion, it may be helpful to provide an overview of the three major philosophical shifts in psychotherapy and their implication on spiritual/religious integration. Historically, these shifts are referred to as the *three forces* of personality theory (i.e., psychodynamism, behaviorism, and humanism) (Slife, 2012). Each of the three forces represents a distinct philosophical posture toward clients, treatment, and truth. These three forces also help contextualize how spirituality and religion are integrated or not integrated within their respective ontology. In many ways, these three forces of personality theory had wide implications on the counseling profession's attitudes and thinking toward religion/spirituality. I will provide an overview of the three forces of personality theory and how they impacted the profession's view of religion and spirituality.

Psychodynamism

Of the three forces of personality theory, the first force, psychodynamism, was perhaps the most revolutionary. Psychodynamism is a movement that is largely oriented around how past traumas (especially surrounding child-parent relationships) impact present-day mental health concerns (Corey, 2017). Psychodynamism is also interested in how the ego attempts to hide troubling thoughts and motivations by making them unconscious and therefore obscured from our immediate awareness (Corey, 2017). Under this framework, counselors help clients become aware of that unconscious material and integrate it properly within their psyche. In

many ways, counselors continue to stack many counseling theories on the shoulders of this first force (Slife, 2012).

Sigmund Freud is widely considered the founder of psychodynamism through his theory of psychoanalysis (Slife, 2012). Freud was a secular and modernist theorist, meaning he embraced universal principles and natural laws (Slife, 2012). Because of this disposition, Freud sought to explain the human psyche as a complex machine and void of anything metaphysical. To Freud, secularism was a dominant vehicle to usher in scientific discovery, and anything to suggest transcendence from natural laws was a barrier to psychological development (Slife, 2012). In this way, Freud explained away people's idea of God as a mere projection or a "longing totem of a primal father." (Slife, 2012, p. 800). Stated differently, Freud did not validate spirituality and religion as having any place within the discovery of truth, but rather, he saw metaphysical beliefs as a way for the psyche to meet emotional needs. In Freud's view, the real psychological healing involved bringing unconscious material, no matter how troubling, to the ego's awareness and reconciling with what was once obscured or hidden through defense mechanisms. Spirituality and religion were among the many ways the psyche obscured troubling unconscious realities to protect what might be too alarming for the ego to face.

Carl Jung is another pioneer in the psychodynamism movement (Slife, 2012). Unlike Freud, Jung was less condescending toward the usefulness of religion and spirituality (Slife, 2012). This may be because his father was a preacher or because he divested from some of Freud's psychoanalytic teachings (Jung, 1963). Jung thought religion was essential to the human psyche because it created needed mythology and archetypes to help make sense of the world (Jung, 1963). Jung was concerned about how many different religions and symbols carried similar, if not the same, messages in order to fulfill some sense of purpose (Jung, 1963). However, his view on religion does not seem to extend beyond his appreciation for their existential utility (Slife, 2012). Jung's does not state plainly whether religion is a real phenomenon that extends beyond a social construct developed by people to help meet

existential needs, making his religious views unclear (Slife, 2012). Instead, Jung seems to rely on his psychodynamism by resting his theories on naturalistic assumptions.

Behaviorism

The second force of psychology, and perhaps the most naturalistic, is behaviorism. B.F. Skinner (1974) is widely considered the pioneer of behaviorism—a force that singularly focused on what was observable, which includes any human interaction we can tangibly see and measure. To Skinner, behaviors are the only psychological phenomenon that can be truly known because they are physically observable, whereas thoughts, feelings, and spirituality are not. Additionally, the connection between knowing and behaviors reinforced the scientific focus of behaviorism over spirituality or philosophy (Slife, 2012). The underlying assumption of behaviorism is that all animals and individuals are motivated by pain (negative reinforcements) and pleasure (positive reinforcements), and following that logic, there is no room for truly self-sacrificial acts of altruism (Slife, 2012). Stated differently, every perceived act of self-sacrifice exists to bring some amount of pleasurable gain to the individual, which necessarily negates any true form of altruism. This idea contrasts sharply with religious ideology in Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam as they discuss virtue in altruism and caution hedonistic proclivities (Slife, 2012). Furthermore, behaviorism exists in tension with religious worship as individuals cannot participate in worship of deities if we are completely governed by reinforcement principles. Certainly, one could argue people are pressured socially into religious worship, but this obscures the possibility of any authentic expression of religious worship. Finally, behaviorism erodes the idea that choice is an option for individuals, especially spiritual/religious choice, because according to its assumptions, humans do not operate under complete free will (Slife, 2012). Instead, individuals merely respond to stimuli in predictable behavioral patterns according to whatever gives pleasure or avoids pain. In this way, the human mind is seen as more mechanistic rather than having a spiritual component or life.

Humanism

The third force, humanism, marks a pivotal shift away from behaviorism and nearly ushers us into the main personality theories used today (Slife, 2012). Under the auspices of Carl Rogers (1961), humanism evolved to heal social problems within the individual through self-actualization. No doubt, humanism was unabashedly conforming to the individualistic values of the West as it prioritized individual expression and exploration over social forces and pressures (Slife, 2012). However, Rogers used humanism to explore human desires, autonomy, and purpose and strayed away from psychology's purely naturalistic focus. For humanists, naturalism was inadequate in capturing the whole human experience, and the subjective nature of people's lived-experiences was just as important, or perhaps more important, than one's observable behaviors (Slife, 2012).

The privileging of individuality and subjectivity seemed to give religion a little more space to flourish. For example, the subjectivity of spirituality and metaphysics was honored under humanism, and if developing one's religion and spirituality was part of the individual's self-actualization process, then it was important to the humanist counselor (Slife, 2012). However, there are still some elements of humanism that could not be easily reconciled with religion. For example, humanism's individual focus privatizes the religious experience and upholds individual relativism over the values of one's affiliated religion (Slife, 2012). In this way, the social pressures of religion are seen as barriers to individual development. Additionally, the location of truth is another contentious point between religion and humanism. Across many religions, truth is located in a deity, scripture, or a religious teacher; it is external and authoritative. In humanism, truth is uncovered within each individual and is a discovery process relative to the individual (Slife, 2012).

From the first to the third force, it seems the trajectory of religion and spirituality were treated with contempt from Freud's psychoanalytic view, then ignored within Skinner's behaviorism, and finally recognized by Carl Rogers as a helpful multicultural variable to examine

in the process of self-actualization. The development of these forces suggests that the counseling profession is on its way to, and has undoubtedly made progress in, understanding the value of spiritual and religious concerns. However, according to the literature cited earlier, students and counseling professionals have yet to understand and demonstrate how to ethically approach spiritual and religious concerns in our pluralistic society.

Current Spiritual/Religious Dynamics in Counseling

Two high-profile court cases have engendered the need for stronger spiritual/religious competencies and faith development in counselor education programs. In 2010, a counseling student, Julie Ward, sued her university, Eastern Michigan State University, after she was dismissed on the grounds of refusing to see a gay client because her personal religious beliefs did not allow her to support his sexual behavior (*Ward vs. Wilbanks et al.,* 2010; Hancock, 2014). Ward's professors knew her personal religious views would possibly prevent her from seeing LGB clients, and to varying degrees, they communicated she would be violating the ACA *Code of Ethics* (2005) discrimination policies (Hancock, 2014). However, her professors still allowed her to advance to practicum (Hancock, 2014). Ward refused to participate in remediation plans claiming her professors violated her First Amendment rights, and the lower court sided with the university (Hancock, 2014). Then the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals remanded the case to the Eastern District of Michigan for retrial, and the case was settled (Hancock, 2014). Ward received a monetary settlement, and the university expunged her dismissal records (Hancock, 2014).

In 2011, Jennifer Keeton, a counseling student at Augusta State University, was asked to complete a remediation plan after she stated that if she were to see a gay client, she would tell him that his behavior is morally wrong and attempt to change his behavior; if the client did not change, she would refer him to a conversion therapist (Hancock, 2014). Keeton declined a remediation plan and sued the university for violating her First Amendment rights (Hancock, 2014). The court dismissed the suit finding no evidence that the ACA *Code of Ethics* was

designed to make her change or alter her religious beliefs (*Keeton v. Anderson Wiley*, 2011; Hancock, 2014).

Because of cases like this, The ACA has more clearly addressed this discriminatory practice by revising their *Code of Ethics* to include the importance of working with clients' spiritual/religious values and not referring clients to other counselors because of perceived value conflicts (ACA, 2014; Kaplan et al., 2017). For example, counselors cannot refer lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) clients or clients considering an abortion to another counselor because the counselor has religious beliefs that are inconsistent with the client's values. Counselors can refer clients when the counselor lacks the *clinical* focus to help the client (i.e., a client may need a specialized trauma intervention that the counselor lacks within their scope of practice), but not when there is a value incongruence (ACA, 2014; Kaplan et al., 2017). However, the literature suggests this new vision brought forward through the *Code of Ethics* has not quite materialized into robust spiritual and religious competencies in counseling programs (Johns, 2017). While the 2014 *Code of Ethics* does protect clients from being discriminated against based on value conflicts (including religious/spiritual values), it does not include spirituality within the context of diversity as a multicultural variable like race, gender, or sexual identity (Johns, 2017).

Counseling Ethics and State Law

Legislative conflicts between state laws and the ACA *Code of* Ethics may be another contributing factor in a Counselor Education program's lack of spiritual/religious training and development. For example, Tennessee Senate Bill 1556 and House Bill 1840 give counselors legal grounds to refer clients to another counselor based on a counselor's conflicting values and goals (Meyers, 2016). The ACA acknowledged these bills as a direct attack on LGBTQ clients in a predominantly conservative state, further marginalizing a population, especially if a client is seeking services in a rural area with limited access to counseling services (Meyers, 2016). Additionally, this bill could also allow counselors to refuse clients based on value incongruences

surrounding political activism, abortion, and other religious or non-religious convictions. The ACA's CEO, Richard Yep, said, "For someone seeking the services of a mental health provider to be told that because of who they are, a service provider will not work with them sends an incredibly negative message of exclusion, bigotry, and discrimination" (Meyers, 2016). Although some supporters of these bills claim they protect counselors' religious liberties by not forcing a counselor to change their personal religious beliefs, Lynn Linde, ACA's senior director for the Center for Counseling Practice, Policy, and Research, says the ACA's *Code of Ethics* does not require counselors to change personal beliefs when they enter the therapeutic space—only to not impose personal beliefs on clients (Meyers, 2016). The ACA has stated it would impose sanctions on any therapist who engages in this discriminatory practice (Meyers, 2016). However, it is unclear what these sanctions would be and what, if any, weight they would hold considering the ACA does not license counselors—only state counseling boards have the authority to suspend, revoke, or restrict licensure. States like Tennessee that enact such legislation, which prioritizes counselor preference based on personal religious values over clients' health and wellbeing, put the future training of religious/spiritual competencies in a precarious position when state legislation and counseling ethics do not align.

Discernment Between Bracketing or Affirming Practice

CACREP-Institutional Misalignment. Conflicts between state legislation and counselor ethics are not the only tensions causing confusion around value incongruences. Another issue in developing spiritual/religious competencies and development is that the ACA and The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) have not yet reconciled two values that are sometimes diametrically opposed, which are especially relevant as it appears in Counselor Education programs. While the ACA and CACREP value and honor religious diversity, they also require counselors to honor clients' identities, including all gender and sexual identities (Smith & Okech, 2016). This can create irreconcilable conflicts when religious values are disaffirming of LGBTQ identities. This conflict happens within CACREP-accredited

counseling programs whose very institutions disaffirm LGB identities (other sexual/gender identities were not discussed in the referenced article) (Smith & Okech, 2016). Smith and Okech (2016) identified at least 15 universities with CACREP-accredited counseling programs, all of which had Christian doctrinal statements that disaffirmed LGB orientations. The authors raise the question of whether these programs can effectively uphold CACREP standards and train counselors to be LGB-affirming while their institutions foster harmful environments to LGB wellbeing.

Counselor-Client Incongruencies. The ambiguity surrounding how to reconcile these client-counselor value incongruencies is not only a problem for CACREP, but it is also present within the ACA. To understand this dynamic, it may be helpful to review Linde's (ACA's senior director for the Center for Counseling Practice, Policy and Research) response to Tennessee's religious liberty advocates. Linde opposes the argument that Senate Bill 1556 and House Bill 1840 protect counselors' religious beliefs by stating the ACA's *Code of Ethics* does not require counselors to change personal beliefs, but instead, they should not impose beliefs on the client (Meyers, 2016). Stated differently, Linde acknowledges that counselors must bracket their personal values if those values interfere with clients' values and goals. However, this position becomes extremely complex and difficult to hold if a counselor is to engage in liberatory and anti-oppressive work with LGBTQ clients, which follow CACREP and the ACA standards while holding religious beliefs that do not recognize all gender and sexual identities. Even if a counselor's disaffirming beliefs are annexed out of the therapeutic space, the counselor can, of course, provide empathy and general support for the client, but their beliefs negate any authentic liberatory counseling with LGBTQ clients (B. Wake, personal communication, June 10, 2021). In other words, counselors cannot help clients work against the same societal barriers counselors consciously or unconsciously embody. Linde's guidance certainly works when the value incongruence between the counselor and client are not considered a threat or oppressive to the client, but her guidance, which is based on the *Code of Ethics*, becomes less useful when

the value incongruence is impeding the counselor's ability to provide anti-oppressive counseling. In summary, the ACA does not have clear delineations for which personal values a counselor can bracket from the therapeutic space in order to meet clients with empathy and nonjudgment, nor which personal values are necessary for a counselor to change within themselves in order to work in a multicultural, liberatory context.

Faith Development

The court cases, legislative examples, and multicultural counseling ethics cited earlier are but a few examples of how faith development, or lack thereof, heavily influences the therapeutic relationship. For this reason, spiritual/religious competencies are a necessary component of multicultural competence. Similar to how counselors must learn how to develop a healthy *intra*personal relationship before developing healthy *inter*personal therapeutic relationships, counselors also need to learn how to develop their faith before counseling others in a faith and/or multicultural context. Furthermore, all faith development must be situated in a multicultural development because faith is a multicultural variable that intersects and impacts other variables like gender, race, and sexuality (Johns, 2017). Stated differently, students' faith development does not progress further without multicultural development and vice versa.

Stages of Faith

James Fowler's (1981) seminal work, *Stages of Faith*, provides a model for faith development integrated with multicultural development. In Fowler's (1981) faith development theory, *Stages of Faith*, he conceptualizes faith development as having six stages with a trajectory that moves toward a more complex multicultural perspective, compassionate action, moral understanding, and sophisticated spiritual depth at each level. Fowler's faith development theory serves as an analytical framework to understand how people move or become stagnant in their faith development process. *Stages of Faith* also conceptualizes how relationships, environmental changes, and sociopolitical events often catalyze the transition from one faith

stage to another as one's awareness and framework must adapt to address the disorientation new perspectives bring.

Fowler operationalizes faith not as inherently religious but as a system by which an individual participates to find existential meaning. He depicts faith as a pyramid with three points: self, others, and a shared center of values and power. By this definition, faith is communal and found among any community system with a shared center of values and power. In this way, one's faith can be held in anything that provides an ultimate source of meaning by which people participate in sharing and acting out their commitment to that meaning. Below is a brief overview of Fowler's six stages of faith:

1. Intuitive-Projective

This faith stage (ages 3-7) is characterized by the psyche's exposure to the unconscious mind before the ego develops protective measures to hide from unconscious thoughts. Religion is learned through experiences, stories, images, and parents.

2. Mystical-Literal

Stage two is most often found in school children who have a strong sense of reciprocity and believe God is influential in carrying out justice. God typically takes an anthropomorphic form, and metaphors and symbols are often taken literally in this stage.

3. Synthetic-Conventional

Stage three occurs in adolescence, and some people carry this stage long into adulthood with the possibility of never graduating to the next faith stage. This stage is characterized by conformity to authority and community. In stage three, people follow the values and traditions of their faith with little reflection, critical analysis, or responsibility to one's own beliefs. People in this stage also fail to understand the sociopolitical systems within people who hold different identities (gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc.).

4. Individuative-Reflective

In this stage (typically ages 25-40), people are confronted with a jarring experience (i.e., hypocrisy of authority, leaving home, and/or a personal encounter with people outside their faith tradition), which results in deep reflection and critical analysis of one's faith, which sometimes puts one at odds with their faith community. Individuals take responsibility for their own beliefs and learn to interrogate values that were once inculcated through their community. This stage also focuses on deconstructing truth and symbols/rituals of faith.

5. Conjunctive

Stage five often occurs during a mid-life crisis and is characterized by an individual's acknowledgment of paradox and transcendence. In this stage, an individual understands the value of deconstruction found in stage four but also acknowledges the mystical power within symbols and rituals. People in this stage embrace the multidimensional and complex nature of truth and thus are much more vulnerable and open to accepting truth found in different faith systems from a place of cultural humility. This faith stage is also characterized by moving from individualistic thinking and behavior (stage four) to constructivist learning and participation in a broader multicultural community.

6. Universalizing

Rarely do adults reach stage six or enlightenment. Fowler reserved this stage for faith heroes like Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Martin Luther King Jr., Jesus, the Buddha, and Mahatma Gandhi. This stage is marked by a radical orthopraxy built upon compassion and justice for all people and seeing everyone as part of a universal community. None of the 359 participants interviewed in Fowler's research were said to have reached this stage.

Comprehensiveness and Dynamism

While the sample demographics are homogeneous (most all his participants are White, American, with a Judeo-Christian worldview), the theory is comprehensive and dynamic in how it describes the faith development process of the narrow population the sample represents, and

this theory is normed after the participant demographics represented in this research. The faith stages have clear characteristics, an intuitive movement toward cognitive/emotional development, and naturally build upon each other. In addition, Fowler used other developmental theories from Kohlberg, Piaget, and Erikson as a blueprint for his faith stages, which may speak to some of its intuitiveness and convergent validity.

An important yet often overlooked aspect of the stages of faith is the dynamic movement from one stage to the next. For example, Fowler visualizes the stages bowing outward--starting at a communal experience, bending out to an individual process at stage four, and then returning to their community toward higher faith stages. In addition to this dynamism, Fowler depicts the faith stages as a spiraling process—meaning people often do not experience an abrupt and definite gateway to a new faith stage. Instead, people experience a continuum of learning and will return to themes of lower faith stages at different times. Similar to counseling or other types of learning, individuals find themselves surprised to be repeating an old lesson even in new contexts, and Fowler's theory accounts for these patterns. Fowler also gives examples of how conversion experiences fit into the model by suggesting that conversions can lead people to jump down a few stages as they begin developing through the complexity of a new faith system.

As an analytical tool, Fowler's theory helps conceptualize narratives and qualitative data surrounding faith by placing that data into developmental stages and processes. Furthermore, Fowler discusses catalysts that help individuals graduate to new faith stages, and these catalysts can help educators implement possible learning objectives or developmental tools to help students advance to higher faith stages. The stages also provide a clear common goal of understanding multiple perspectives and positionality, universal compassion (in belief and practice), connection to community, critical interrogation of one's own beliefs, cultural humility, and comfortability with ambiguity and paradox. What Fowler suggests as markers for spiritual

development is not a moderate stance between right or left-leaning faith but a set of values and ideals that exist on a completely different axis, which transcends any one group's agenda.

White Evangelicalism

Historically, white evangelical culture has largely stood in opposition to the pluralistic and liberatory values the ACA hopes to engender by protecting people's mental health and wellbeing. White evangelical culture, its theology, and accompanying political and nonprofit organizations, like Focus on the Family, the Moral Majority, the Family Research Council, and the Christian Coalition, have largely opposed social, governmental, and legal protections for LGBTQ people, women, immigrants, and Black people (Du Mez, 2020; Jones, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017). White evangelicals have also become a powerful political voting block and significantly influence American Christianity, politics, and culture (Du Mez, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017). For this reason, examining white evangelical values is particularly relevant to this research given their prominence and influence on American society. Furthermore, these cultural values will inevitably intersect with CACREP and ACA multicultural ethics and competencies. Additionally, because faith development is situated within multicultural development, understanding how white evangelical culture and faith intersect with multicultural values is relevant to this research. I focus on the intersection of race and evangelical culture because one's race significantly impacts the way evangelicals think about social justice, individualism, theology, racism, and politics (Du Mez, 2020; McCaulley, 2020; Jones 2020). Because race, gender, and sexuality are all relevant identities to intersectionality and multicultural counseling, focusing intently on how White evangelicals think about these identities will provide critical insight into how White Christian counseling students socialized by evangelical culture may encounter and understand these identities.

Defining Evangelicals

Evangelicalism contains a wide network of Protestant denominations like Presbyterians, Baptists, non-denominational churches, Fundamentalists, etc. (FitzGerald, 2017). However, not

every member or church within some of these denominations aligns with evangelicalism and may instead call themselves mainline Protestants, which is the more moderate to liberal tradition of the two (FitzGerald, 2017). Nevertheless, most historians and theologians agree that evangelicals are best defined by the Bebbington (1989) quadrilateral, which has four statements of faith: conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism. The Bebbington quadrilateral is somewhat dynamic in that its four statements have varying definitions throughout different evangelical organizations and research articles. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) echoed the Bebbington quadrilateral in a 2015 faith statement in attempts to gain some continuity and definition for what evangelicals believed using the following statements (Stetzer, 2018):

- Biblicism: The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.
- Activism: I need to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior.
- Crucicentrism: Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that removes the penalty of my sin.
- Conversionism: Only those who trust Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation.

However, the Bebbington quadrilateral's definition of evangelicals captures a wide Christian subset and overlaps with many groups who would otherwise not identify as evangelical or evangelicalism (Du Mez, 2020). Furthermore, according to the NAE's statement of faith and the work of sociologists, there are some specific biblical interpretive beliefs and cultural values not explicitly expressed in the Bebbington quadrilateral but that are highly relevant to the identity of evangelicals (Du Mez, 2020; Jones, 2020; Juzwik, 2014). For example, evangelicals often understand their salvation as a "born again" experience or having a "personal relationship with Christ" (FitzGerald, 2017; Jones, 2020). Most evangelicals also believe in A.A. Hodge and B.B. Warfield's late 19th-century *doctrine of inerrancy* (meaning the historical accounts in the Bible are without error and the Bible communicates a cohesive theologically true message) and

consequently employ a hermeneutical approach that privileges, to varying degrees, a more literal interpretation of the Bible (Du Mez, 2020; Jones, 2020; Juzwik, 2014; Sandeen, 1970; FitzGerald, 2017). Additionally, due to evangelical history and its intersection with race, politics, and cultural values, the Bebbington quadrilateral's operational criteria for capturing evangelicals seems inadequate in capturing or defining the culture of evangelicalism, especially white evangelicalism.

Cultural Norms of White Evangelicals

Because evangelicals have historically been intertwined with politics, it can be difficult to define evangelicalism solely on their theological beliefs (Du Mez, 2020). Politically speaking, evangelicals represent mainstream American Christianity and tend to hold conservative values (Du Mez, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017; Jones, 2020). According to the Pew Research Center's (2014) survey data of Americans (n = 35,000) across all 50 states, evangelicals are the biggest group (25.4%) within American Christianity. Evangelicals are primarily White (76%), Republican (56%), married (55%), and believe the Bible should be interpreted literally (55%). Regarding specific political values, they largely oppose gay marriage (64%) and abortion (63%), believe government aid to the poor does more harm than good (56%), and prefer smaller government/fewer services (64%) (Pew Research Center, 2014). According to other survey data, White evangelicals are more likely than any other religious group in America to support preemptive war (Lobe, 2002), condone the use of torture (Pew Research Center, 2009), favor the death penalty (Cox, 2007), hold more authoritarian views, express higher levels of confidence in their religious leaders (Du Mez, 2020), believe Islam encourages violence (Pew Research Center, 2017), and support Christian nationalism (the idea that America is God's chosen nation and should therefore adopt Christian values over pluralism) (Du Mez, 2020). Additionally, they are more likely than any other faith group to hold negative views toward immigrants (Jones et al., 2016), and over half of White evangelicals believe that a majority non-White American population would be a negative development for America (Jones et al., 2018).

Although some Black people identify with evangelicalism, many Black Protestants, even those who align with many theologically evangelical beliefs, describe evangelicalism as a "white brand" of American Christianity (Du Mez, 2020). Furthermore, many journalists, sociologists, and historians traditionally separate evangelicals and Black Protestants by race because of the distinct histories and foci these groups hold (Du Mez, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017; Jones, 2020). Regarding gender and sexuality, it may be helpful to understand how these two separate constructs intersect and overlap within White evangelicals' values and their theology. Because race, gender, and sexuality are all highly salient identities relevant to multicultural counseling, and therefore faith development, these constructs are worth exploring in order to understand how these identities intersect with white evangelical faith.

White Supremacy

Robert Jones (2020), the CEO and founder of Public Religion Research Institute (PPRI), investigated white Christianity's long history of white supremacy through historical and regression analysis. While his study discusses the whole of American white Christianity, he also examines White Christian subsets, including White evangelicals. Some of his historical examples include how White Christians theologically justified slavery by using the biblical "curse of Cain" story to say that Black people were "marked by God" and inferior to White people or reference the apostle Paul's command for slaves to obey their masters (Jones; 2020; McCaulley, 2020). Jones (2020) also cites how White Christians had specific "slave Bibles" for enslaved Black people that omitted sections of scripture, like the book of Exodus, that might otherwise justify their equality and liberation. Even as many Northern White evangelicals rallied support around slavery abolition, their vision did not often include integration or equal voting rights (Jones, 2020). Furthermore, *the great switch*, a term used by political scientists to describe the increasing migration of White Christians from Democrat to Republican party affiliation ever since the Democrats started aligning with the civil rights movement, serves as a reminder of Martin Luther King Jr.'s lamenting White Christians' lackluster involvement in the

racial justice movement (Jones, 2020). The famous evangelist, Billy Graham, characterizes the waffling of many White evangelicals during the civil rights movement. He was quick to condemn racism and praised desegregation in school but recommended Martin Luther King Jr. slow his efforts. Graham also did not support forced government integration or civil disobedience for the sake of advancing racial equality (Jones, 2020; Du Mez, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017). For Graham and many evangelicals, accepting that racism was a systemic issue that ran deep within the DNA of American society was difficult, and racial injustice was reduced to an issue of the human heart, which needed saving through Jesus (Du Mez, 2020; Jones, 2020). White evangelical universities during this time also adopted a similar approach by denouncing racism and adopting a colorblind theology under idioms of spiritual unity, thereby failing to understand their connection to oppression and white socialization and their responsibility to enact systemic change (Curtis, 2019).

Many evangelical colleges and universities are enmeshed in white supremacist legacies, the most notable being Bob Jones University and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Jones, 2020). In 2015, the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Al Mohler, apologized for the school's long history of supporting slavery and racism, but he also backtracks by calling the white supremacists who founded the seminary "titans of faith" and excuses their actions with a sweeping claim that no one ever confronted them on the harm their ideology caused even though there are documented accounts of its founders engaging in abolitionist debates (Jones, 2020; Mohler, 2015). Bob Jones faced a similar controversy when it lost its tax-exempt status after the university leaders refused to reverse course on its racial discriminatory admissions practices in 1976, to which Jerry Falwell Sr., a former segregationist, prominent evangelical leader, and founder of Liberty University and the Moral Majority, responded saying, "The idea that faith and politics don't mix was invented by the Devil to keep Christians from running their own country" (Sterns, 2007). Ironically, a decade earlier, just weeks after Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama, Falwell Sr. preached:

> Believing the Bible as I do, I would find it impossible to stop the pure saving gospel of Jesus Christ and Begin doing anything else—including the fighting of communism, or participating in the civil rights reform. . . Preachers are not called to be politicians but to be soul winners (Duffy, 2007).

Bob Jones waited until 2000 to drop its racially discriminatory policy on interracial dating (Niebuhr, 2000) and apologized for it in 2008 (Cary, 2017).

Another example of white supremacist legacies specific to White evangelicals lies in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the largest denomination within white evangelicalism, and their attempts to reconcile their racist behavior. The SBC was founded on white supremacy by actively supporting confederacy and segregation after the confederates lost the Civil War, and the SBC waited till 1995 to publicly apologize for its pro-slavery heritage (Jones, 2020). Today, the SBC continues to have a contentious relationship with its problem of racism. After the death of Trayvon Martin in 2012, the SBC's president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), Richard Lands, criticized Obama's comments of the case by calling it an effort to "gin up the Black vote" and empathized with people's fearfulness of Black men since they are "statistically more likely to do you harm than a White man" (FitzGerald, 2017). After facing a swift backlash from Black Protestants and an internal investigation, Lands resigned and was replaced by Russell Moore (FitzGerald, 2017). Under Moore's leadership, the SBC made some strides in 2016 when Moore spoke out against the problematic ways White Christians have aligned with Trump and White Christian nationalism (Du Mez, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017). However, Moore's advocacy was met with varying degrees of opposition from other White evangelical tycoons like John MacArthur, Franklin Graham, Jerry Falwell Jr., James Dobson, and Wayne Grudem (Du Mez, 2020). In 2021, Moore resigned from his position in the SBC, citing a culture of racism, threats from white supremacists within the SBC, and the SBC's mishandling of sexual abuse cases (Bailey, 2021). In 2019, the SBC also affirmed Critical Race Theory and intersectionality (CRT) as an analytical tool for understanding power and racism, and in 2020, its president, J.D. Greear, urged SBC pastors to declare "Black Lives Matter" after

a police officer lynched George Floyd (Graham & Dias, 2021). Both the SBC's acceptance of CRT and Greear's declaration have faced significant backlash, and a 2021 SBC presidential candidate and pastor, Mike Stone, rallied pastors to pressure the SBC to reverse course and condemn CRT as racially divisive and antithetical to the Baptist faith (Graham & Dias, 2021).

Racism Index. Jones' (2020) survey data is perhaps the best display of white evangelical attitudes toward Black people. The data describes various White Christian groups, White nonaffiliates, and Black Protestant attitudes toward current racial justice issues. In this national survey of 2,509 participants, PPRI asked White Christians to rate their feelings of warmth toward African Americans on a scale of 1 to 100 (1 being cold feelings and 100 being warm feelings). Of the various White Christian groups (White mainline Protestants, White Catholics, and White evangelicals), White evangelicals self-reported the highest feelings of warmth toward African Americans (mean = 71) (Jones, 2020). However, when White evangelicals and other White Christians were asked about attitudes about symbols of white supremacy, economic and social inequality between African Americans and Whites, and unequal treatment of African Americans and Whites in the criminal justice system, White evangelicals and other White Christians aligned themselves with responses common to white supremacy culture. Ranking higher than any other White Christian group, White evangelicals associate the Confederate flag (86%) and Confederate monuments (85%) as more of a symbol of southern pride than racism. In contrast, 54% and 41% of religiously unaffiliated Whites and 24% and 16% of Black Protestants share the same associations for Confederate flags and monuments, respectively. Additionally, more than any other White Christian or White religiously unaffiliated group, 71% of White evangelicals view police killings of African American Men as isolated incidents rather than a broader pattern of police brutality toward African Americans. Finally, out of all White groups measured, White evangelicals had the highest amount of *disagreement* (67%) with the statement: "Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class."

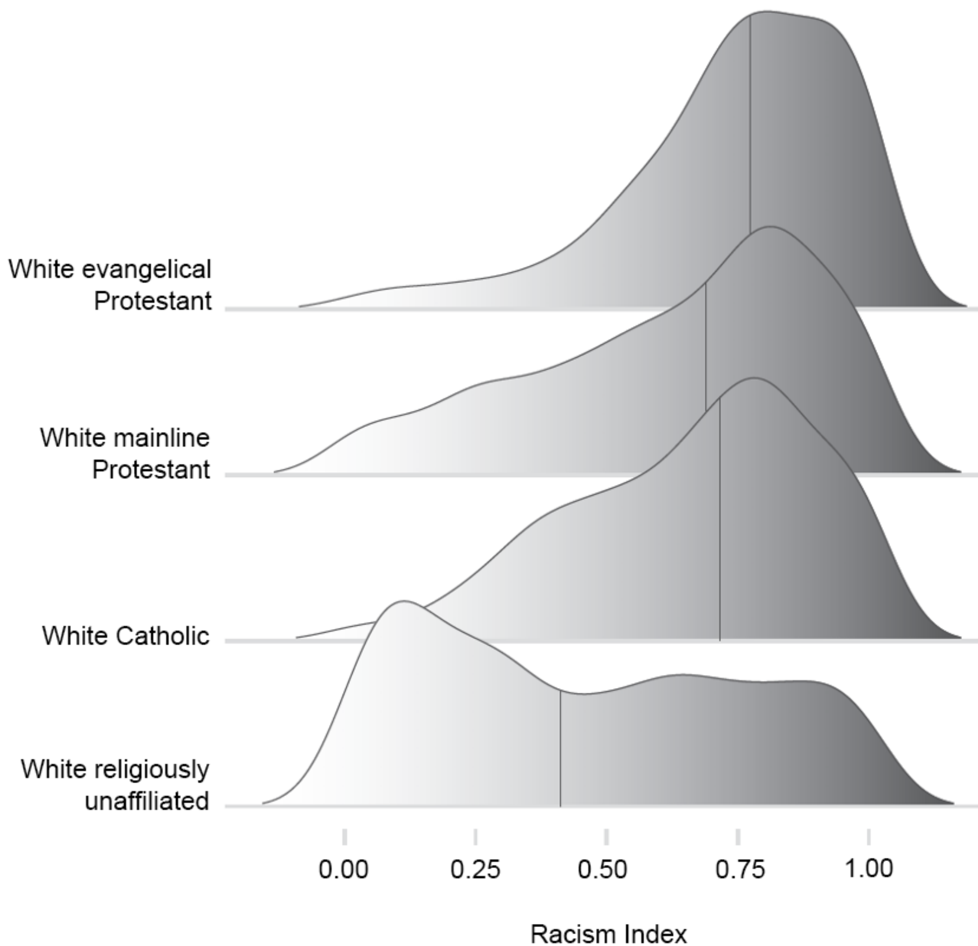
Jones (2020) took his analysis a step further by using a racism index assessment to measure racial resentment in different White Christian groups and White non-religious people. The racism index assessment asked 15 questions, and each respondent selected an answer that varied on a scale of racist to anti-racist attitudes. The assessment contained questions regarding perceptions of confederate symbols, the treatment of African Americans in the justice system, whether African Americans use racism as an excuse for economic inequalities more than they should, perceptions of police brutality toward African Americans, thoughts on athletes kneeling during the national anthem, opinions on African American economic mobility and meritocracy, and views on structural racism. The scale had a high Cronbach's alpha of .91, which is a measure of internal consistency—meaning each question is highly related to each other and confirms the same underlying concept. The racism index was then scored on a 0-1 scale (1 being the most racist attitudes). Out of every White group, White evangelical Protestants scored the highest (.78) on the racism index scale (see Figure 1.1). This median score has nearly equal distribution on either side of the average, which indicates a high degree of homogeneity in racist attitudes held by White evangelicals. By contrast, White religiously unaffiliated people had a median score of .42, and Black Protestants had a median score of .24. In this same analysis, Jones controlled for political party, age, gender, household income, education level, geographic location, homeownership, church attendance, and living in a metropolitan area. The results indicated that identifying as a White Christian or a White evangelical independently predicts greater racist attitudes—meaning the relationship between racist attitudes and White Christian identity are not better explained by these other variables.

Regarding church attendance, Jones (2020) noted no significant relationship in lower attitudes of racial resentment for White Catholics and White mainline Protestants who attended church more frequently. However, for White evangelicals, there is a positive relationship between church attendance and racial resentment. The survey data indicates a higher racism index score is four times more predictive of White evangelicals who are frequent church

attenders than infrequent church attenders (see Figure 1.2). Jones summarizes his findings for White Christians with the following statement:

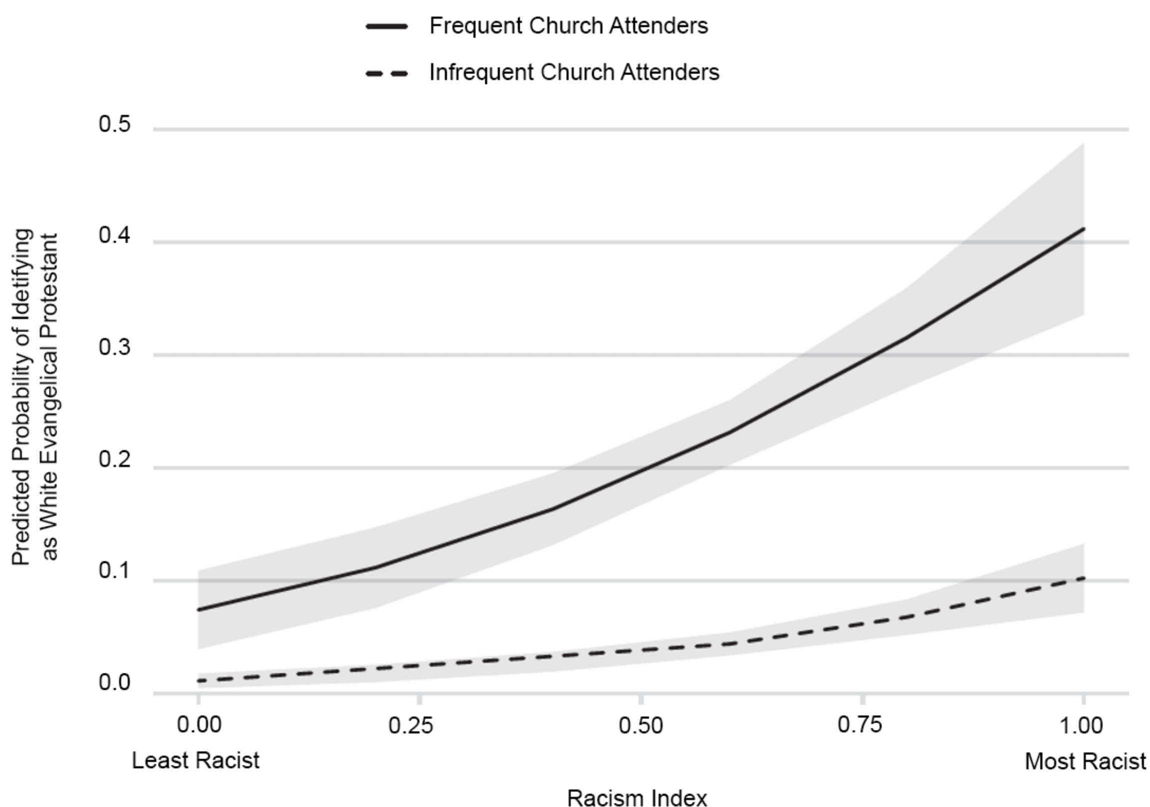
> …if you were recruiting for a white supremacist cause on a Sunday morning, you'd likely have more success hanging out in the parking lot of an average White Christian church—evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, or Catholic—than approaching Whites sitting out services at the local coffee shop (p. 185).

Figure 1.1. Distribution of Racism Index Scores among White Religious Subgroups.



Note: Median lines shown. From *White too long: The legacy of white supremacy in American Christianity.* R. P., Jones, 2020, Simon & Schuster.

Figure 1.2. Predicted Probability of White Evangelical Protestant Identity, by Racism Index Score and Church Attendance Frequency.



Note: From *White too long: The legacy of white supremacy in American Christianity.* R. P., Jones, 2020, Simon & Schuster.

Theological Implications on Racism and Social Justice. White evangelical theology may impact white evangelical Christians' understanding of power, privilege, race, and oppression, as well as their connection to those dynamics. Given that white evangelical culture and white Christianity as a whole score higher on the racism index compared to their White religiously unaffiliated counterparts, their driving theology is worth investigating. As mentioned earlier, many White Christians used theology to overtly justify slavery, but today, White Christian theology has much subtler implications on understanding race and social justice. White Christian eschatological views are one example of these subtle implications. These

eschatological views discuss how they understand the "end times" or the end of humanity's time on earth. Before the Civil War, many White Southern Christians, especially those in Calvinist and Presbyterian (both denominations with evangelicalism) theologians, believed in a *postmillennial* eschatological framework, which emphasized that the role of the Christian is to build a society that is more Christ-like to usher in Christ's second coming or return to earth during the end times (Maddex, 1979; Jones, 2020). Many proslavery theologians believed the Confederacy was part of that progress toward God's ideal society, and in this way, White Southern Christians felt a duty to be a part of a social "progress" to prepare for Christ's return (Maddex, 1979; Jones, 2020). However, after the Civil War ended and the Confederacy lost, many proslavery theologians switched to adopting a *premillennialist* eschatological view, and over time, most White evangelicals adopted premillennialism (Maddex, 1979; Jones, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017). Compared to *post*millennialists, *pre*millennialists emphasize the sinful nature of humanity and believe the world will become increasingly depraved until Christ returns (Maddex, 1979; Jones, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017). Because of this eschatological pessimism, social reform efforts are often stalled by premillennialists' attitudes of resignation. Billy Graham's comment on Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech is a clear example of this type of resignation: "Only when Christ comes again will little White children of Alabama walk hand in hand with little Black children." (Emerson & Smith, 2000). In this way, Graham's eschatological framework sidelined any hope for a collective shift toward reconciliation. In Graham's mind, this kind of dramatic healing could only come through Christ's return. In practice, premillennialist theology has historically excused White evangelicals from concerning themselves with social reform by encouraging a defeatist perspective toward collective redemption happening in the present day (Jones, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017).

The shift White Christians made from postmillennialism to premillennialism is another example of how a social framework—theology, in this case—morphs to protect white supremacy. Postmillennialism protected white supremacy at a time when overt racism was

socially accepted, and when white supremacy had to become covert to survive, the theology shifted to accommodate implicit racism and the inaction of White Christians. While these theological assumptions may not be overtly racist, when viewed within their historical context and impact on Black people, they functionally maintain covert white supremacy culture. Furthermore, this covert racism does not require White evangelicals to be conscious of their history and theological evolution. The impact of their eschatological framework can exist independently of any malicious intent or awareness.

White evangelicals also become blind to their racism through their religious values around freewill individualism, relationalism, and antistructuralism (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Using qualitative and quantitative research, Emerson and Smith found White evangelicals hold strong beliefs in these three domains—all of which impact how they understand racism. For example, freewill individualism for White evangelicals deemphasizes the idea that society can be responsible for sin, and it is the individual who is held accountable for their actions (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Relationalism is the white evangelical way of seeing problems through poor relationships between individual people rather than inequitable laws or systems (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Finally, antistructuralism describes White evangelicals' suspicion toward institutional explanations for social problems because it shifts the blame away from holding the individual accountable (Emerson & Smith, 2000). At the heart of all these beliefs is an over-indexing of individualism, a value firmly held by many White people, Christian or not (DiAngelo, 2018).

This individualism also manifested in where and how White evangelicals interpret scripture. White evangelicals focus heavily on the writings of Paul and interpret his writings through their individualism by describing the process of salvation and experience with God (Jones, 2020). For example, the evangelicals' cultural phrase "a personal relationship with Christ" reflects an individualistic experience with God rather than a community-focused experience (FitzGerald, 2017; Jones, 2020). In this way, White Evangelicals also understand

salvation as an individual belief and repentance (FitzGerald, 2017; Jones, 2020). This individualistic framework of biblical interpretation obscures the Bible reader's ability to recognize and validate power dynamics, systemic issues, and collective responsibility for societal ills. Stated differently, the individualistic framework White evangelicals use to understand problems as a collection of personal sins rather than a socialized force of abuse can inhibit them from having a fundamental grasp on macrosocial oppression and their connection to it (Jones, 2020).

In contrast, Black Christians tend to focus on the book of Exodus and the prophets, and they draw parallels between the crucifixion and the lynching of Black people (Jones, 2020; McCaulley, 2020). These readings of the Bible inform a heavier focus on societal ills, liberation for the oppressed, and a collective responsibility to work toward that liberation. Through this focus, Black Christians have a much more robust understanding of how relating to God is a communal experience and how liberation from societal oppressions is central to the gospel rather than an additive. In this way, salvation is not reduced only to individual belief and repentance but also a form of collective liberation in a present-day, socially located context (McCaulley, 2020; Jones, 2020).

In summary, Jones' (2020) survey data reveals that while White evangelicals perceive themselves as having "warm feelings" toward Black people, their history, theology, and attitudes toward racial justice stand in stark contrast from their positive self-evaluation. Although the white evangelical *not racist* posturing is ubiquitous across all types of White people (Helms, 1995; DiAngelo, 2018), what is unique to White evangelicals is the degree to which their racial attitudes are held, the degree to which they are unaware of their racism, and how their theology has protected white supremacy as it changes through history.

Gender and Sexuality

Traditional views on gender are another critical evangelical cultural value that impacts many other perspectives like sexuality, marriage, sexual abuse, and militant masculinity. Understanding these values in a theological and cultural context is necessary to fully elucidate

this cultural norm (Du Mez, 2020). Theologically speaking, evangelicals largely endorse complementarianism, which, generally speaking, supports traditional and defined gender roles expressed in men and women (Du Mez, 2020). Complementarians understand these gender roles, especially those within the church, as God-given and natural for men and women to fulfill (Du Mez, 2020). Furthermore, because God created men and women differently socially and biologically, men and women behaviorally and emotionally complement each other within the church and the family unit (Du Mez, 2020). Evangelicals believe that men and women are equal, but equality does not mean men and women can or should fulfill the same roles (Du Mez, 2020). More specifically, White evangelicals generally believe that women, within the bounds of heterosexual marriage, are to submit to the authority of their husbands, and husbands are to submit their authority to Christ (Du Mez, 2020; Setzer & Yanus, 2018; Fea, 2018; Beaty, 2017). The complementarian perspective also impacts women's ability or inability to hold some leadership positions within churches, especially if the leadership position requires teaching men from a pastoral role (Fea, 2018).

White Evangelical Women in Leadership. While there are women leaders in white evangelicalism like Elizabeth Elliot, an evangelical author who rose to fame after her husband was killed during his missionary service, and Sarah Palin, John McCain's running mate, they often serve as auxiliary supports to male leadership, thereby distancing themselves from feminism (Monk-Turner, 2020; Du Mez, 2020). Beth Moore and Jen Hatmaker, two highly influential evangelical authors, represent the few exceptions to serving as auxiliary roles to male leadership, but their stories confirm a cultural bias toward their leadership and movement outside evangelical norms (Du Mez, 2020). Beth Moore made national news in 2021 after she elected to leave her place within the SBC, citing concerns over its support for Donald Trump, a culture of Christian nationalism, mishandling of sexual abuse, and after facing a significant amount of sexism, which was invigorated by John MacArther (a prolific evangelical author, megachurch pastor, and speaker) after he publicly compared her to a TV jewelry salesperson,

advised her to “go home,” and went on to criticize the #MeToo movement (Smietana, 2021). Shortly after, LifeWay, a prominent evangelical publishing house and division of the SBC, discontinued publishing Moore’s books (Smietana, 2021). Additionally, Jen Hatmaker faced sharp criticism and ostracization from the evangelical community when she publicly supported affirmed LGBT people in the church, and LifeWay discontinued selling her books (Du Mez, 2020).

Historical and Cultural Impacts. According to Du Mez (2020), the evangelicals’ views on gender may be shaped more by political forces than by theology. In Du Mez’s historical analysis, she found evangelicals started focusing heavily on gender during the Cold War. In the mind of many Americans and evangelicals, the individual families were the nation’s most important social fabric and strength, which were under attack by communism and its egalitarian imposition. Therefore, with their God-given leadership roles, men had a responsibility to exercise protection over their families (Du Mez, 2020). This trend of protecting masculine leadership and traditional gender roles continued as White evangelicals largely opposed the Equal Rights Amendment, seeing it as a threat to the family unit they fought so hard to protect (Du Mez, 2020). Consequently, most evangelicals respond to LGBTQ inclusivity and rights with either silence or opposition as these initiatives deviate from the majority-held social fabric of the traditional family unit (Du Mez, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017).

Carrying this trajectory further, white evangelical culture and leaders promoted a type of *warrior Christ,* drawing parallels between Jesus and *Brave Heart’s* William Wallace, John Wayne, and other militarized White male icons (Du Mez, 2020). The *warrior Christ* archetype ubiquitously appears in white evangelical sermons, conferences, and mass-evangelical media, which helped rally evangelical support for war efforts against communism and preemptive war in the Middle East (Du Mez, 2020). Additionally, this archetype also helped promote an idea of masculinity that emboldened evangelical activists to engage in the cultural wars creating clear

lines of division and battle between white evangelical ideals and social movements that challenged their traditional norms (Du Mez, 2020).

The warrior Christ is somewhat of an ironic characterization when considering Jesus' message of nonviolence, turning the other cheek, loving your enemies, giving the cloak off your back to the man who steals from you, and a focus on the poor and marginalized (Rohr, 2019). However, the popularity of the premillennialist apocalyptic fiction series, *Left Behind*, was one of a few white evangelical cultural influences on the adoption of the warrior Christ figure (Chapman, 2013). The *Left Behind* series sold more than 65 million copies, and one survey estimated that one in five Americans had read at least one of the books within the series (Chapman, 2013). The authors, LaHaye and Jenkins (2004), factiously describe Christ bringing peace upon his return by wielding a sword and slaying tens of thousands of enemies—"splayed and filleted" in a gruesome bloodbath. Although this imagery borrows from and expands upon a series of prophetic visions written in the book of Revelation, a Times Magazine poll from 2002 estimated that 59% of Americans believe the events of these visions will literally transpire, which suggests the books likely had a significant impact on how the warrior Christ archetype and the biblically-masculine ethic developed in white evangelical culture (Chapman, 2013).

A more recent example of this type of warrior Christ is perhaps best displayed in the celebrity of the megachurch pastor and author, Mark Driscoll. Under Driscoll's leadership, he grew his church empire, Mars Hill, from one to 15 campuses across five states (Du Mez, 2020). Driscoll embodied a type of militant masculinity, insisting that men do not attend church because they had no interest in a "hippie, queer Christ" (O'Brien, 2008). Instead, Driscoll described Jesus as an "Ultimate Fighter warrior king with a tattoo down his legs who rides into battle against Satan, sin, and death on a trusty horse" (Driscoll & Breshears, 2008). Driscoll had a pugnacious style that attracted White evangelical men to his church, books, and speaking engagements as he discussed themes of biblical masculinity, his loathing of effeminate church-going men, and sex advice (Du Mez, 2020). Driscoll's celebrity continued to rise within white evangelicalism as

he formed alliances with White evangelical powerhouses, Al Mohler, John Piper, Mark Dever, C.J. Mahaney, and Josh Harris, all of which found themselves aligning to varying degrees under *New Calvinist* doctrine, which brought a stronger emphasis to complementarianism and, in the words of John Piper, gave Christianity a “masculine feel” (Piper, 2012; Du Mez, 2020). In 2014, Driscoll resigned from his pastoral role after his church leadership united against him due to Driscoll’s history of plagiarism, pattern of intimidation, verbal abuse, and a resurfaced online post where Driscoll discusses how America had become a “pussified nation” where men were raised by “bitter penis envying burned feminist single mothers” (Du Mez, 2020).

It is worth noting that the warrior Christ characterization and parallel soldier iconography targets almost exclusively White evangelicals (Du Mez, 2020). This may speak to some of the aversive racism White evangelicals hold by seeing Black aggression as threatening, while White aggression is natural and God-given (Du Mez, 2020). Although White evangelicals point to scripture as the basis for their complementarian views, for which there is substantial supporting evidence within the Bible if read with a specific hermeneutic, their culture over-extends their interpretation and theology by failing to recognize how cultural movements within American history, politics, and media have created a caricature of Christ and traditional complementarian theology.

Misogyny and #MeToo. White evangelical books on male and female sexuality and marriage were another consequence of this characterization of complementarianism, which inevitably impacted the white evangelical response to the #MeToo movement. Before LaHaye’s *Left Behind* series, he wrote books about marriage and sexuality, which helped pioneer a specific culture of sexuality within white evangelicalism (Du Mez, 2020). In 1976, LaHaye and his wife, Beverly, wrote *The Act of Marriage* to promote a complementarian view of gender and sexuality within marriage. Including its updated 2000 edition, the book was widely popular among White evangelicals and sold at least 2.5 million copies (Zimmerman, 2016). In *The Act of Marriage*, the LaHayes advise women to “clean up, paint up, and fix up” (p. 97) for their

husbands. If their husbands lack confidence, the LaHayes (1976) advise women to "make aggressive love to him … dress provocatively and use feminine charm to seduce him" (p. 25). In this way, the man's ability to lead was linked to the satiation of his sexual appetite, which was his wife's duty to fulfill (LaHaye & LaHaye, 1976). For the LaHayes, "The very nature of the act of marriage involves feminine surrender" (p. 38). Furthermore, the book was intensely homophobic, calling homosexuality a disease that spiritual counseling could cure (LaHaye & LaHaye, 1976). *The Act of Marriage* was not the first of its kind promoting this characterization of sex roles between men and women (Zimmerman, 2016; Du Mez, 2020). Three years before *The Act of Marriage*'s publication, Marabel Morgan, a famous evangelical author, published *The Total Woman*, a book that also focused on the women's responsibility to satisfy her husband's libido, suggesting a wife finishes chores early so that she has enough energy for sex upon her husband's return (Zimmerman, 2016). In its year of publication, *The Total Woman* outsold *All the President's Men*, a Time's "All-Time 100 Best Nonfiction Book" detailing the Watergate scandal (Zimmerman, 2016). Both *The Total Woman* and *The Act of Marriage* led the charge among a plethora of evangelical books that suggested women's satisfaction was cultivated by submitting to their husbands and fulfilling the traditional gender roles they were designed to embody (FitzGerald, 2017; Du Mez, 2020).

The idea that men naturally have unbridled libidos and their wives are to use their femininity as a tool of sexual pleasure for their husbands had a significant impact on the white evangelical psyche, and this impact extended far beyond the context of healthy heterosexual relationships. The quality of LaHayes', Morgan's, and Driscoll's misogyny and understanding of gender dynamics, especially pertaining to sex, is also reflected in how white evangelicalism routinely excuses sexual abuse and male aggression. In his book *Love Must be Tough,* evangelical author, political activist, psychologist, and Founder of Focus on the Family, James Dobson, warned husbands of wives who deliberately instigate their husbands into hitting them

to gain moral leverage over them and leave their marriage. This same argument is still present in his updated 1996 edition (Du Mez, 2020).

In a devotional, Dobson (2021) later wrote of a moment where he drove around town “to cool off” after a fight with his wife Shirley when an “attractive woman” pulled up alongside him, smiled, and turned down a side street while looking back at him. In recalling this nonverbal exchange, Dobson said, “she was obviously flirting with me,” and “I knew she was inviting me to follow her.” Dobson's interpretation codes this woman as the temptress, the trap, and the test. He concludes this story by writing, “I didn’t take the bait.”

In the wake of the 2017 #MeToo movement, the trend of misogyny continued in white evangelical culture and its dismissal of sexual abuse. In 2018, Roy Moore ran on the Republican ticket to fill an open Senate seat in Alabama and was endorsed by Dobson and Trump (Du Mez, 2020). As stories surfaced about his sexual abuse of teenage girls, Russell Moore condemned evangelical support for Roy Moore (Du Mez, 2020), but according to one poll, 37% of Alabama’s evangelicals said they were *more* likely to vote for him after the allegations (Ballesteros, 2017). After election day passed and Roy Moore lost, exit polls showed that 80% of White evangelical Alabamans voted for Roy Moore (Washington Post, 2018). In the following year of 2018, Brett Kavanaugh, a conservative Supreme Court nominee, faced allegations of sexual assault. In a national poll, White evangelicals were asked to weigh in on whether Kavanaugh should be confirmed if the allegations were *true*. Forty-eight percent of White evangelicals said he *should* be confirmed, 36% said he should not be confirmed, and 16% were unsure if the allegations were true (Montanaro, 2018).

The mishandling of sexual abuse was not only present in White evangelicals’ support for its conservative politicians. A similar culture of unwavering defense of patriarchy continued when sexual abuse came to light within the white evangelical community. For the sake of brevity and in the interest of revealing white evangelical culture as it stands today, I will not detail the numerous accounts of sexual misconduct and abuse within white evangelicalism prior to the

#MeToo movement. In one of the earlier incidents in 2017, accreditors put John MacArthur's seminary on probation for operating under a "pervasive climate of fear, intimidation, bullying, and uncertainty" and failing to comply with the requirements of the Violence Against Women Act (Kelderman, 2019; Smith, 2018). In the following year of 2018, the evangelical megachurch pastor, Andy Savage, publicly confessed at his church to his "sexual incident," which involved him sexually assaulting a 17-year-old girl who was a student under his care as a youth pastor (The New York Times, 2018). The confession, which was video recorded, was widely circulated by *The New York Times* (2018) and showed the congregation appearing supportive of Savage, giving him a standing ovation for his confession. Shortly after, another evangelical megachurch pastor, Bill Hybels of Willow Creek, made national news when seven women accused him of sexual misconduct and abuse of power (Goodstein, 2018). Church leadership initially doubted the allegations and gave him a standing ovation after denying the accusations (Goodstein, 2018). However, he resigned shortly after mounting evidence and national news substantiated the survivors' accusations (Goodstein, 2018). As an advocate of egalitarianism, Hybels demonstrated that the culture of misogyny and sexual abuse extended beyond his complementarian counterparts (Du Mez, 2020).

Additionally, in 2018, Paige Patterson made national headlines for his maltreatment of domestic and sexual abuse survivors and for covering up colleagues' child sexual abuse (Bailey, 2018). Patterson, a powerbroker within white evangelicalism and the SBC, served as the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1992 to 2003, the president of the SBC from 1998 to 2000, a trustee member of Cedarville University from 2003 to until he resigned in 2018 in light of the scandal, and the president of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from 2003 till his firing in 2018 (Bailey, 2018; WYSO, 2018). Furthermore, he helped lead the *conservative resurgence* in 1979 in an effort to oust theological liberals from the SBC (Merritt, 2018). Patterson was accused of advising multiple women to stay with their abusers, advising a woman not to report her rape and to forgive her rapist, and helping promote

an SBC pastor, Darrel Gilyard, despite having secretive knowledge of rape and molestation allegations against Gilyard (Bailey, 2018; Downen, 2019). News also broke about Patterson helping Paul Pressler, a colleague who helped Patterson lead the SBC conservative resurgence, cover up Pressler's sexual abuse of molesting and soliciting sex from men and boys dating back to the 1970s (Merritt, 2018).

The evangelical leadership's reaction toward Patterson's abuse of power and sexual abuse complicity was mixed at this point in the #MeToo conversation. Thomas Rainer, president of LifeWay, Ed Stetzer, a professor at Wheaton College, Al Mohler, and mega-church pastor, Matt Chandler, swiftly condemned Patterson's actions (Merritt, 2018). However, the current SBC president, Steve Gains, stayed silent and advised people to "read your Bible more than you check social media," and a former SBC president praised Patterson, calling him "a man of God and a man of your word." (Merritt, 2018). Patterson's friend and president of Cedarville University, Thomas White, equivocated by condemning spousal abuse, offering sympathy toward Patterson by expressing gratitude for the opportunities Patterson gave him, and said he would not make any recommendations to the university's board about whether Patterson should be fired (WYSO, 2018). Patterson resigned from the board, and White committed to protecting victims of sexual abuse at Cedarville University (WYSO, 2018). Two years later, White hired an employee, Anthony Moore, just six months after Moore was fired from his pastoral position at The Village Church, a megachurch in Dallas, for sexually abusing a subordinate; White had full knowledge of Moore's history at the time of his hire (Shellnutt, 2020). White also omitted the details of Moore's history to the board of trustees upon Moore's hiring in 2017 and did not publicly report what he knew until the story broke in 2020 (Shellnutt, 2020). White was placed on administrative leave and reinstated several weeks later following an internal investigation that concluded that no sexual abuse had occurred due to Moore's hiring (Shellnutt, 2020).

In 2021, Ravi Zacharias, a celebrity apologist and founder of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM), was found to have sexually abused multiple massage therapists

and have a rape allegation (Silliman & Shellnutt, 2021). Zacharias is not racially White, but he was a powerful figure in shaping White evangelical apologists, and his ministry is the largest apologetics organization in the world (Silliman & Shellnutt, 2021). In 2017, Zacharias sued one of his victims for slander, repeatedly denied her allegations, and RZIM supported Zacharias' innocence (Silliman & Shellnutt, 2021). Zacharias died in 2020, largely unscathed and venerated by the white evangelical community (Silliman & Shellnutt, 2021). As more reports of abuse began to mount after his death, RZIM hired an outside investigation team with the bias that Zacharias' innocence would be confirmed (Silliman & Shellnutt, 2021). Instead, the investigation confirmed the sexual abuse allegations and RZIM's failure to provide accountability for Zacharias as he evaded their oversight (Silliman & Shellnutt, 2021). RZIM has since reversed course and apologized to the public and survivors (Silliman & Shellnutt, 2021).

In summary, the combination of complementarian theology and white evangelical culture created an influential standard that privileged militant masculinity and unbridled patriarchy. This characterization of complementarian theology has wide implications for how White evangelicals view marriage, gender, sexual abuse, and male leaders who promised to protect these traditional gender roles. Regarding the #MeToo movement, what is unique to white evangelicalism is not their male leaders' proclivity to abuse women; that same dynamic is reflected in the broader culture during #MeToo. Instead, the differentiating factor for white evangelicalism is how they *responded* to the abuse with dismissal and the protection of patriarchy.

Dobson, Evangelical Politics, & "The Gay Agenda." Another consequence of the combined evangelical culture and corresponding theology is its legacy of anti-gay political action mobilized by evangelicals through the 1970s until the Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act in 2013 (though political action still continued after this ruling, the Supreme Court's legalization of same-sex marriage and shifting public opinion severely hampered the latitude for which evangelicals could oppose gay rights through policy) (FitzGerald, 2017). The

Christian right leaders started taking opposition to gay rights in the 1970s when cities across the nation began legislating against anti-gay discriminatory practices (Williams, 2010). In 1977, a famous Southern Baptist singer, Anita Bryant, was dismayed when her hometown of Miami, Florida, prevented schools from engaging in discriminatory hiring practices toward gay people (Williams, 2010). In an effort to keep gay people out of schools, Bryant rallied 60,000 signatures in support of rescinding the anti-discrimination ordinance by putting her own measure on the next local ballot (Williams, 2010). Bolstered by her political influence, Bryant started the organization, *Save our Children*, in an effort to fight against gay rights (Williams, 2010). In the name of protecting children, she toured the South raising money from evangelical church groups and conservative political action committees (Williams, 2010). In addition to her tour, Bryant appeared alongside televangelists like Pat Robertson, a right-wing evangelical mogul and star of the Christian Broadcasting Network's *The 700 Club*, and was featured on several other popular evangelical television programs to highlight her cause (Williams, 2010). In November of that year, Bryant united with 100 influential pastors, held a *Save our Children* rally at the Miami Convention Center, and two weeks later, her referendum passed by a margin of two to one (Williams, 2010).

Encouraged by Bryant's campaign, Jerry Falwell Sr. took a lead role in launching more anti-gay rights initiatives across the country (McGirr, 2015). In 1978, Falwell focused his efforts on California by backing a state legislator, John Briggs, who put a statewide referendum on the ballot (McGirr, 2015). The referendum asked voters to give the school districts the authority to fire any publicly gay teachers or "any who promote homosexuality as a lifestyle" (McGirr, 2015, p. 258). Falwell spoke at rallies across Southern California and mailed out hundreds of letters to California pastors asking for their support (McGirr, 2015). The referendum did not pass, but Falwell did not relent. After Harvey Milk, an openly gay city supervisor of San Francisco, was murdered, Falwell preached a televised message proclaiming God was punishing the city for its "sexual mutiny" (Williams, 2010). That same year, he started a "Clean Up America" campaign to

fundraise and mobilize political support for anti-gay initiatives on local ballots, which he never did in his hometown in Lynchburg, Virginia (Williams, 2010).

James Dobson had arguably the most powerful political sway in galvanizing evangelical support against gay rights during the 1990s and early 2000s, and understanding Dobson's reach is critical to accurately contextualize how influential he was in evangelical culture, especially with his anti-gay initiatives. As a child psychologist, Dobson attracted a following in the 1970s by offering "Bible-based" advice for child-rearing and marriage. Dobson's talent in marketing toward evangelicals through his media empire, Focus on the Family, can hardly be overstated. He launched a lecture series, *Where's Dad?*, which, according to some estimates, reached 100 million people (Blumenthal, 2009; FitzGerald, 2017). Additionally, Focus on the Family expanded Dobson's reach through radio programming, video productions, and instructional materials (FitzGerald, 2017). By 1976, donations to Focus on the Family were averaging more than 100 million dollars a year, and over time, their mailing list had expanded to over three million people (Gilgoff, 2007; Martin, 1996). By the mid-1990s, Dobson sold over 16 million copies of his 14 books, and Focus on the Family published 10 different magazines and newsletters catering to a wide range of audiences (FitzGerald, 2017; Martin, 1996). Using daily radio programming, Focus on the Family aired its 30-minute segment 18,000 times a week across over 4,000 facilities, reaching more than five million listeners (Martin, 1996). The only radio celebrities outpacing Focus on the Family at that time were Paul Harvey and Rush Limbaugh (Martin, 1996). At its peak, Focus on the Family's 80-acre campus housed 1,300 employees, had its own zip code and interstate exit sign in Colorado Springs, and welcomed roughly 200,000 visitors a year (FitzGerald, 2017; Gilgoff, 2007; Martin, 1996).

As Dobson's media empire burgeoned, so did his political influence. During President Carter's administration, Dobson edged his way into political influence by asking his radio listeners to write to the White House and request that he be invited to their Conference on the Family. Through the help of his audience sending 80,000 calls and letters to the White House,

he was invited (Alexander-Moegerle, 1997; Gilgoff, 2007). This invitation and the subsequent political connections inspired Dobson's establishment of the Family Research Council (FRC), which was designed to monitor legislation and policy on family affairs (Gilgoff, 2007). With the help of Gary Bauer, a top domestic policy advisor to President Reagan, Dobson broadened the reach of FRC by acquiring a mailing list of half a million people and became the most powerful Christian right lobbying organization in Washington (Gilgoff, 2007; FitzGerald, 2017). Dobson also established state-level, independently funded Family Policy Councils across the nation, acting as political extensions of Focus on the Family (Gilgoff, 2007). These councils were designed to raise grassroots support for FRC's initiatives in Washington (Gilgoff, 2007). In addition to this political expansion, Focus on the Family widened its political influence through a magazine, *Citizens,* and a radio program, *Family News in Focus* (Gilgoff, 2007). Through this network, Focus on the Family occupied 34 state affiliates and acquired over two million members (FitzGerald, 2017).

From a policy perspective, Dobson loathed compromise and nuance, and this perspective characterized how Dobson approached gay rights on a political level. Dobson prided himself on principle and was not known for equivocation or nuance. Dobson's friend, Charles Colson, commented on Dobson's crystal-clear approach, saying politics "are loaded with nuances, and he's never met a nuance that he liked. He's not a nuanced guy" (Buss, 2005, p. 181). Additionally, Dobson took an uncompromising perspective to political agendas; Winston Churchill served as an inspiration to this approach (Buss, 2005). In Dobson's office, a painting of Winston Churchill hung on his wall, and he sometimes quoted Churchill's mantra, "Never give in, never, never, never" (Buss, 2005, p. 364). Dobson clarified his disposition on policy when he backed several controversial anti-gay initiatives. In 1992, through the help of Focus on the Family's widely syndicated commercials and programming, he joined a campaign to pass an amendment to the Colorado state constitution to block anti-discrimination laws designed to protect gay peoples' employment and housing opportunities; this campaign effort included

overturning already established anti-discrimination policies (Gilgoff, 2007). The campaign succeeded in passing the amendment, which was subsequently overturned by the Supreme Court (Gilgoff, 2007). When the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), a federal law allowing states to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages, arose in 1996, Senator Ted Kennedy coupled with it an amendment to outlaw discrimination against gay people in the workplace (Alexander-Moegerle, 1997). Dobson, being a purist, told his audience to support DOMA on the condition the attached anti-discrimination amendment was struck down (Alexander-Moegerle, 1997). For Dobson, risking the failure of DOMA was a better alternative than a compromise (Alexander-Moegerle, 1997).

Part of Dobson's ability to deny gay people their rights to equal employment/housing opportunities and marriage came through the way he and other evangelicals framed sexual orientation. In 1998, Focus on the Family launched a series of conferences around the country called Love Won Out (Erzen, 2006). Conference speakers condemned homosexuality as sinful and abnormal, and they gathered psychologists to draw connections between child abuse, unhealthy family dynamics, or gender identity confusion to homosexuality (Erzen, 2006). Although the mental health profession no longer had a diagnosis for gay people, it, too, was complicit in pathologizing gay people with clinical disorders until the American Psychiatric Disorders removed this diagnosis in 1973 (Erzen, 2006). Love Won Out perpetuated this pathologization of gay people by treating homosexuality as environmental, preventable, and changeable, which consequently meant gay people could not experience discrimination since their identity was not immutable (Erzen, 2006). Love Won Out also supported Exodus International, an organization of "ex-gay" ministries designed to help people become straight through prayer and conversion therapy (Erzen, 2006). Shortly after Love Won Out's conferences, its "ex-gay" director was found at a gay bar and later disavowed his belief in conversion therapy (Erzen, 2006).

During the Bush administration in the early 2000s, Dobson's mercurial attitude toward Bush was largely contingent on Bush's equivocating stance on gay marriage. Dobson called Bush's decision to appoint a gay activist to head the Office of National AIDS Policy "unwise" and felt his family issues were muddled through Bush's rhetorical themes of "common ground" and "bipartisan consensus" (Williams, 2010, p. 251). But after 9/11 sparked a wave of anti-Islamic sentiment among evangelicals, many evangelicals were fully backing Bush, and by the 2004 reelection campaign, Dobson and his constituents were ready to mobilize around Bush and fight against what Dobson called "the gay agenda" (FitzGerald, 2017).

The mobilization around fighting "the gay agenda" in the early 2000s became a concerted effort for Dobson and other evangelical leaders. During this period, the SBC adopted a resolution to oppose "all efforts by any court or state legislature to validate or legalize same-sex marriage or other equivalent unions." Michael Farris, the head of the homeschooling defense association, summed up many evangelicals' sentiment toward civil unions, saying:

> I don't care if you call it civil unions. I don't care if you call it [a] domestic partnership. I don't care if you call it cantaloupe soup. If you're legally spouses at the end of the day, I am not willing to do that (Kirkpatrick, 2004).

In 2002, FRC proposed a stronger bill blocking courts and state legislators from granting any legal benefits to gay couples (FitzGerald, 2017). Dobson also supported the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment, which would legally define marriage as a union between one man and one woman in the constitution (Gilgoff, 2007). In a 2003 Focus on the Family newsletter, he called the legalization of same-sex marriage a ruse conjured by gay activists whose goal was to end marriage entirely (Gilgoff, 2007). He continued, "Most gays and lesbians do not want to marry" (Gilgoff, 2007, p. 147). According to Dobson, the very survival of Western civilization was at stake, and it hinged upon the Federal Marriage Amendment (FitzGerald, 2017). Harkening back to the culture war and militaristic rhetoric evangelicals were familiar with, Dobson called

this effort to pass the amendment “our D-Day or Gettysburg or Stalingrad" (Gilgoff, 2007, p. 147; Du Mez, 2020).

In 2003, Tony Perkins became the new president of FRC and made the Federal Marriage Amendment its top priority (Blumenthal, 2009). Perkins, a graduate of Falwell’s Liberty University, was known for combatting gay rights as a Louisiana state legislator (Blumenthal, 2009). In 1996, while he was the campaign manager for a Republican senatorial candidate, Perkins paid $86,500 for former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke’s mailing list to help widen the campaign's reach (Blumenthal, 2009). Despite the evidence of his signature authorizing the payment, Perkins denied knowing about this purchase when the scandal broke two years into his presidency at FRC, and his tenure at FRC continued (Blumenthal, 2009).

As more states began to adopt new legislation to legalize gay marriage, evangelical leaders and policy groups began to redouble their efforts to fight against gay marriage. The Christian right organizations launched campaigns against gay marriage with radio and TV broadcasts, daily emails, and 10 million direct mail fundraising letters to conservative constituents (Blunt, 2003). The FRC created a Marriage Protection Pledge and asked all elected officials, federal and state, to sign it (Blunt, 2003). Additionally, Dobson resigned as president of Focus on the Family, concentrating his efforts to fight gay marriage “on a political level” (Kaplan, 2004, p. 156). For perhaps the first time in years, the American public stood behind evangelicals as nearly two-thirds of the public opposed gay marriage, defining this issue as a “make or break” voting issue (Kaplan, 2004, p. 164). However, even with the American populous largely opposing gay marriage, The Federal Marriage Amendment predictably failed to pass in the Senate in 2004, and the Christian right bolstered their resolve (Gilgoff, 2007).

In an effort to keep the Federal Marriage Amendment moving forward, Christian right and evangelical organizations targeted their churches more directly during the presidential election. For the first time, the SBC uncharacteristically engaged its constituents directly in politics by mounting an *I Vote Values* initiative, which aimed to increase voter registration

among churches, advocate for value-based votes over economic issues, and bring attention to President Bush's pro-life stance and support for the Federal Marriage Amendment (Gilgoff, 2007; FitzGerald, 2017). Dobson continued to press into his political advocacy by founding Focus on the Family Action, a 501(c)(4), which gave the Focus network more latitude for political lobbying (FitzGerald, 2017). Additionally, he united Focus' initiatives with the SBC and mailed out *I Vote Values* kits, which included voter registration forms and promoted its causes to 12,000 churches across the nation (Gilgoff, 2007; FitzGerald, 2017). Furthermore, Focus' pastor outreach ministry used its mailing list to encourage over 100,000 pastors to preach on the initiative's political social issues, gay marriage and abortion, claiming it was their Christian responsibility to lean into the political issues at stake (Gilgoff, 2007; FitzGerald, 2017). In addition to these efforts, evangelical leadership organized two *Mayday for Marriage* conferences with speakers like Richard Lands (president of the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission), Chuck Colson (a former political advisor to President Nixon and founder of Prison Ministry International), Alan Chambers (president of Exodus International), Perkins, and Dobson (Ma, 2004; FitzGerald, 2017). The two events rallied over 200,000 people around political action to preserve traditional marriage (Ma, 2004; FitzGerald, 2017). Dobson decried the media's portrayal of it as an anti-gay event, saying:

> We're here because we believe in the institution of marriage. … There are many in the homosexual community that have been hurt by us [Christians]. As Christians, we must pull them into the church. You can't win people to Christ without respect. However, there are some things that are right and others that are wrong. It is because we [care] for the welfare of children. There have been 10,000 studies that children do best raised with a mother and father committed to each other (Ma, 2004).

The sociologist, Judith Stacey, responsible for the research Dobson commonly cites in reference to parenting, sharply criticized Dobson's distortions of her research, saying none of her research compared outcomes between heterosexual parents and gay/lesbian parents (Paulson, 2006). Instead, her research only compared the outcomes of two heterosexual parent households and single-parent or divorced parent households; no gay/lesbian couples were part

of her participant pool (Paulson, 2006). In summary, Dobson wielded Stacey's research in tandem with his talks against gay marriage to falsely draw the implication that gay/lesbian parents cannot adequately support the emotional wellbeing of their children; this conclusion did not exist in the data. This was not the only time Dobson misinterpreted family and sexual orientation research. Researchers Carol Gilligan, Gary Remafedi, and Kyle Pruett joined Stacey in lambasting Dobson's mischaracterization of their research in support of conversion therapy and elevating heterosexual parenting (O'Leary, 2007; Bensen, 2006; Birkey, 2008).

Come election day, the evangelicals were an influential voting block and played a significant role in Bush's reelection (FitzGerald, 2017). Accompanying the election, the fight against gay marriage succeeded in states like Oregon, Mississippi, and Ohio, as state amendments passed legislation either prohibiting civil unions between same-sex couples or the legalization of gay marriage (FitzGerald, 2017, Gilgoff, 2007). In the case of Ohio, this swing state became a deciding factor in the presidential election (FitzGerald, 2017). Ohio's Issue One, a policy prohibiting same-sex civil unions, became a contributing factor in the voter turnout in support of Bush. Issue One passed by 62%; 80% of White evangelicals voted in support, and they offered Bush 75% of their vote (FitzGerald, 2017, Gilgoff, 2007). According to several postelection studies, the marriage amendment had contributed to Bush's narrow win (FitzGerald, 2017). In the end, the Federal Marriage Amendment never materialized, and evangelical leaders' ephemeral victory in November was eclipsed by the evangelicals' perception that Bush waffled on his promise to them by not advocating strongly enough for the Federal Marriage Amendment (FitzGerald, 2017).

For a time, evangelical leaders successfully framed marriage equality as an attack on traditional marriage, the family unit, and society. Although these evangelicals would not characterize their efforts as "anti-gay", their support for traditional marriage was mobilized at the expense of gay people's right to marry and, in some cases, their right to equal employment/housing opportunities. Furthermore, using unsubstantiated psychological claims,

homosexuality was framed as a curable disorder stemming from childhood trauma, and as a child psychologist and marriage and family guru, the ubiquitous Dr. Dobson became a credible spokesperson to disseminate this misinformation to credulous listeners through conferences, books, lobbying, radio programming, and promotion of conversion therapy. Additionally, the efforts to strip away basic rights to housing, employment, and marriage, and/or to pathologize a sexual identity were, and continue to be, directed toward a marginalized population of people who are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to attempt suicide, experience depression and anxiety, be forced out of their homes, and ostracized by their communities (FitzGerald, 2017; Rosario et al., 2012; Cochran et al., 2003). Furthermore, studies have shown conversion therapy, residence in states impacted by amendments denying their civil liberties, and community opposition significantly contribute to higher rates of stress, depression, and/or suicidality for LGB people (Taglienti, 2021; Hatzenbuehler 2010; Cox et al., 2011). Regardless of the evangelical leaders' intentions to frame their efforts as standing up for traditional marriage and not be portrayed as "anti-gay", the *impact* of their actions, according to research, betrays those intentions.

Trump and White Evangelicals

Du Mez (2020) and Jones (2020) use their historical and regression analyses to draw a connection between the white evangelical culture of white supremacy and militant masculinity and their affinity for Donald Trump. In overwhelming numbers, 81% and 76% of White evangelicals voted for Trump in 2016 and 2020, respectively (Jones, 2020; Du Mez, 2020). By contrast, 96% of Black Protestants and 62% of White religiously unaffiliated voters voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016 (Jones, 2020). At first glance, it seems odd that a brash, thrice-married billionaire with a history of sexual impropriety who once supported Planned Parenthood and admitted to never asking for God's forgiveness would become so venerated by White evangelicals, and for that reason, many White evangelicals like Russel Moore were baffled by the exit poll data (Gabriel, 2016; Du Mez, 2020; Jones, 2020). However, according to Jones

(2020) and Du Mez (2020), the data cited earlier suggests Trump appealed to White evangelicals by invoking a sense of nostalgia (i.e., “Make America Great Again”) where white dominance and traditional gender/sexuality roles were overtly accepted and woven within American society. In many ways, Trump’s “nod and wink” response to white supremacy displayed in Charlottesville, Minneapolis, and Portland, his extensive focus on immigration restriction and anti-trans military policy, and his repeated misogynistic comments and actions embodies, albeit more brashly, dominant white evangelical ideals that extend beyond purely pro-life, economic, and evangelical religious liberty concerns (Jones, 2020; Du Mez, 2020).

Some scholars interpret Trump’s election as the evangelical culture’s backlash against the Obama administration (Du Mez, 2020; Jones, 2020; FitzGerald, 2017). Although younger evangelicals were more likely to support Obama, a culture of unbridled fear spread irascibly through factions of mainstream evangelicalism after his administration (FitzGerald, 2017). This deleterious sentiment toward Obama’s election became most evident when, just weeks before Obama’s first victory in 2008, Dobson published through Focus on the Family Action (Focus on the Family’s conservative political extension) the 16-page *Letter From 2012 in Obama’s America* (FitzGerald, 2017). This letter detailed a dystopian future for America if Obama were to be elected, and Dobson predicted many catastrophes including but not limited to: a liberal Supreme Court forces the Boy Scouts to disband because of the court’s decision to “hire homosexual scoutmasters and allow them to sleep in tents with young boys,” tens of thousands of Christian teachers quit or are fired, private Christian schools close, homeschool is outlawed, families move to Australia and New Zealand, healthcare is nationalized with lengthy lines for surgery and no access to hospitals for people over eighty, Iran explodes a nuclear bomb in Tel Aviv, Russian occupation of the Baltic States and Eastern Europe; conservative radio has been shut down, many Bush officials are imprisoned, and Obama represses citizen dissent through intimidation (FitzGerald, 2017). None of these predictions came true, but to many White

evangelical leaders and laymen, Obama was the antithesis of their ideal president, making Trump the symbolic opposite of Obama and savior of white evangelical values.

The New Evangelicals

Although the history of white evangelical culture reflects opposition to gender equality and racial justice, there are smaller but significant forces within evangelicalism that have deviated from its cultural norms. During the second term of the Bush administration, white evangelical culture started to shift in a different direction (FitzGerald, 2017; Harris, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Mendenhall, 2006). Although there had already been ingroup critics of evangelicalism from authors and civil rights advocates like Jim Wallis, their efforts never materialized any structural changes within mainstream evangelicalism (FitzGerald, 2017). However, at the beginning of the 21st century, many evangelicals and evangelical leadership castigated the *Christian Right* and its powerhouses of political operatives like James Dobson, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell Sr. (FitzGerald, 2017). Evangelical megachurch pastors and leaders like Rick Warren, Jim Daly, Richard Cizik, Joel Hunter, David Gushee, and Russell Moore, although some of whom are theologically conservative, voiced concern over how evangelicalism became increasingly undifferentiated from Republican politics as well as being known for being anti-LGBTQ and anti-abortion rather than having concern for the poor and marginalized (FitzGerald, 2017). Tracking with what sociologists called the *New Evangelicals*, Warren's, Hunter's, and Moore's views on marriage and abortion reflected a more nuanced view than their predecessors (FitzGerald, 2017). Instead of focusing on outlawing abortion, many new evangelicals discussed providing more governmental and medical aid for those most disenfranchised through pregnancy and motherhood (FitzGerald, 2017). For the new evangelicals, life after birth was equally as important to protect, which meant being pro-life included supporting social services, literacy programs, contraceptives, healthcare, and opposing mass incarceration and capital punishment (FitzGerald, 2017). New evangelicals were also recognizing the value of creating a pluralistic society rather than a conservative Christian

theocracy (FitzGerald, 2017). In this way, new evangelicals saw the value in supporting LGBTQ rights, which existed independent of their marital doctrinal beliefs. In 2014, when the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage, a group called Evangelicals for Marriage Equality applauded the decision and breached the boundaries of evangelical norms, claiming that Bible-believing evangelicals can support the civil right of same-sex marriages (FitzGerald, 2017). Additionally, about 100 evangelical pastors went a step further, calling for protections against employment and housing discrimination toward LGBT people and repented of evangelical complicity and marginalization of LGBT people (Kuruvilla, 2015). Additionally, new evangelicals supported by Moore and Cizik began to defend the religious freedoms of all religions, not just their own (FitzGerald, 2017). Furthermore, new evangelicals led by Cizik, Hunter, and Gushee found themselves aligning with traditionally liberal social concerns like climate change, poverty, immigration, and opposing preemptive war (FitzGerald, 2017). In many ways, new evangelicals were returning to their 19th-century northern roots of social reform while simultaneously splintering evangelicals' unified front of Christian nationalism (FitzGerald, 2017).

In a 2011 regression analysis, Justin Farrell sought to understand the splintering between young and old evangelicals and identify contributing factors associated with the liberalization of young evangelicals. Farrell formulated three hypotheses based on his review of the relevant literature: 1) The current trend of young evangelicals marrying later exposes them to a wider degree of personal freedom, contact with diversity, and more flexibility to "tinker with new and potentially more liberal perspectives," 2) believing that personal experience guides one's source of moral authority opens young evangelicals to wider moral discernment on cultural issues, and 3) education *will not* be a significant contributor toward liberalizing thought because the literature suggests that religion can act as an insulator to liberal forces within education. Farrell separated evangelicals into two age cohorts (ages 18-29 and 30-80), and anyone self-identifying as a Black Protestant was left out of the analysis. Additionally, Farrell controlled confounding effects such as gender, political identity, geographical location, race, and

frequency of religious service attendance. Using a Likert scale, Farrell asked his participants their level of agreement with moral statements concerning abortion and same-sex marriage. The results indicated that younger evangelicals are significantly more likely to rely on personal experience as a tool of discernment in understanding right and wrong, and they are more likely to have inclusive views towards same-sex marriage compared to their older cohort. There was no significant difference between older and younger evangelicals' attitudes toward abortion legality. Regarding same-sex marriage, marital status was the strongest predictor of attitudes toward marriage inclusivity; unmarried participants had higher attitudes of acceptance toward same-sex marriage. One’s source of moral authority was also a significant predictor of attitudes toward same-sex marriage but not as significant as marital status. Finally, one’s level of education did not significantly predict attitudes toward same-sex marriage or abortion. In Farrell’s discussion, he suggests the current culture’s focus of sexuality over abortion likely impacts younger evangelicals’ alignment with their older cohort over abortion and misalignment over same-sex marriage.

White Evangelical Culture’s Impact on Counseling Students

Although there are undoubtedly normative movements of sexism, anti-LGBTQ political action, and covert white supremacy within white evangelicalism, assuming all White evangelicals share the same opinions on gender, sexuality, and race is reductive. As mentioned earlier, given the survey data presented and the new evangelical movement, there are strains of White evangelicals who do not find themselves comfortable within the dominant norms of their culture. When considering White Christian counseling students shaped by white evangelical culture, this subset may find themselves more at odds with their own culture, comparatively speaking, given the nature of counseling and the values the ACA upholds. Even so, as is the case with every culture, all White evangelicals and post-evangelicals are impacted to some degree by their culture’s socialization and values. Therefore, these values must be interrogated

because white evangelical culture impacts this population of counseling students at some level within their faith development and counseling ethics.

While there is research discussing the intersection of conservative Christian counselors, ethical practice, and faith development, there appears to be no literature that addresses the dynamics of white evangelical culture and how it impacts the faith development of White Christian students who identified with evangelicalism. Therefore, understanding the culture and history of white evangelicalism, specifically, is critical because it gives counselor educators and this demographic of students a lens to better understand the impact their culture has on faith development and working with diverse populations. Given their history, it seems likely that White Christian students shaped by white evangelical culture may experience some disorientation within their faith as they learn multicultural competencies and ethics within CACREP and the ACA.

Although some of these students may come into their programs as post-evangelical, according to the dynamics of faith development cited earlier, the faith and multicultural development process is recursive and requires students to continually learn, unlearn, deconstruct, and reconstruct new faith paradigms. The past impacts the present and is continually checked, revisited, and reworked in developmental processes, including but not limited to multicultural, faith, and psychological development. White evangelical culture at large seems to be at odds with many of the liberatory, multicultural practices in counseling, and when current or White post-evangelical students are confronted with this tension, it is unclear how they resolve experiences of faith disorientation, especially given lack of spiritual/religious focus within counselor education. If left unresolved or in a state of disorientation, White Christian students shaped by evangelicalism may negatively impact their clients, especially marginalized clients, by bringing this tension into the therapeutic space, trying to work out their disorientation with their clients, and/or neglecting to explore spiritual and multicultural issues in counseling.

Evangelicals in Higher Education

How current or White post-evangelical counseling students experience faith disorientation in counseling programs is unclear, but research suggests some evangelicals are likely to feel isolated in their development because of the ideological differences between them and their colleagues and professors (Brow et al., 2014; Bryant, 2005; Moran et al., 2007). As cited earlier, social justice issues and multicultural competencies comprise the core ideological differences between White evangelicals and the counseling profession. Because these values are inevitably political, it is vital to understand how White evangelicals perceive themselves and others in a political and religious context within higher education. Although conflating conservatism with evangelicalism is reductive, there is substantial overlap between the two identities as a whole. Similarly, professors and students in mental health fields lean politically left and exist on a continuum of political beliefs (Parke, 2019). Investigating how White Christian students who identify or once identified as evangelical may perceive their experience in higher education is crucial to developing a context for their decision to enroll in secular counseling programs and how they experience faith and multicultural development in their program.

Political Dynamics in Mental Health Graduate Programs

Because conservative politics has become so enmeshed within white evangelical culture, it may be helpful to first look at the political dynamics of mental health graduate programs. Using a series of regression analyses, Parke (2019) investigated some of these political dynamics within various mental health programs to understand the relationship between political affiliation and stress, perceived hostility, and perceived discrimination. She collected data from 512 participants across the United States from counseling, counseling psychology, social work, clinical psychology, couple and family therapy, and pastoral counseling programs. Counseling students (27%) and clinical psychology students (38%) had the biggest representation within the sample. Overall, 61% of her sample identified as liberal-leaning on a Likert scale. Across various political domains (social, economic, and foreign policy), an

identification with liberal social issues (76%) represented the highest homogeneity. When asked how students perceived their colleagues across political domains, 91% perceived their colleagues to be liberal-leaning on social issues. Regarding the relationship between political affiliation and stress, perceived discrimination, and perceived hostility, conservative-leaning students reported perceiving more hostility and discrimination by their peers than liberal-leaning students. However, liberal-leaning students self-reported higher stress levels and poor health (i.e., fatigue, depression, and anxiety).

The political context surrounding Parke's data collection period may explain some of the results. Parke collected her data during the first year of the Trump Administration, a period characterized in research by increased political hostility (Rogers et al., 2017). Parke suggests this political context could have impacted the results by increasing perceived hostility from right-leaning students and stress/poor health experienced by left-leaning students. Furthermore, feeling a part of a larger political social group or forces, such as having a conservative president, may act as a protective agent against stress/poor health for right-leaning students (Greenaway et al., 2015). Parke's conclusions are consistent with current literature, which suggest macro-level forces and contexts are significantly impacting Americans' stress compared to smaller micro-level forces (American Psychological Association, 2017). Finally, previous research suggests concerns over social justice, which are associated with liberal ideology and under threat from the Trump Administration, increase stress (Tutashinda, 2015; Murray, 2017; Calder et al., 2017; Jones, 2020). Given this research, Parke suggests this may partially explain why left-leaning mental health students experienced higher stress levels and poor health outcomes.

Religious Perspectives of Higher Education

The hostility conservative-leaning students perceive from their professors can also be filtered down to evangelical students. For example, evangelical students are often stereotyped as "opposed to progress," undemocratic, intolerant, and irrational (Yancy & Williamson, 2015, p.

59), and they often report feeling oppressed or unwelcome on college campuses (Moran et al., 2007). Furthermore, some evangelical students indicate they face disbelief when sharing their negative experiences in higher education and purposefully withhold their religious identity for fear of being pulled into debates among peers (Brow et al., 2014; Bryant, 2005; Moran et al., 2007). In a qualitative study examining 25 (24 of whom were White) undergraduate evangelical students' experiences in higher education at two midwestern public universities, students identified themselves as a "minority group" and separated their "authentic" faith from that of other Christian students who were not as involved in their faith (Moran et al., 2007). Furthermore, they described the campus culture as being "overly humanistic" and "materialistic" and felt other religions were privileged above Christianity while Christianity was scrutinized (Moran et al., 2007).

There is also evidence of varying peer perceptions, both positive and negative, toward evangelicals depending on the student's identities and their institution. In a regression analysis, Mayhew et al. (2017) evaluated non-evangelical students' (n = 11,432) levels of appreciative attitudes toward evangelicals using a Likert scale. The results indicated that students identifying as Mormon, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, or "other" worldviews had more appreciative attitudes toward evangelicals than those who identified as agnostic, atheist, Buddhist, nonreligious, or secular humanists, who had lower appreciative attitudes. Men, women, and White students also had significantly higher levels of appreciativeness toward evangelicals than gender nonconforming students who had significantly lower levels of appreciativeness toward evangelicals. Finally, the type of institution also significantly correlated with levels of appreciativeness. Students from non-religious institutions generally had lower levels of appreciativeness toward evangelicals than Protestant institutions. The data suggests students holding marginalized identities are likely to evaluate evangelicals less favorably because of the oppressive history evangelical culture carries.

Accurate Terminology

It is unclear if evangelicals who identify themselves as a “minority group” are using that term to proportionally describe their group in a given context or if it is being conflated with marginalized people groups (i.e., those who are systematically disenfranchised because of their race, gender, or sexual orientation). If it is the latter, this connection is mistaken from a classic sociological standpoint because a belief or identification with their faith group is, to varying degrees, chosen and voluntary rather than an immutable characteristic (Wertlieb, 1985; Wirth, 1970). Furthermore, the research cited earlier suggests that some evangelicals and/or right-leaning students use the words *oppression* and *discrimination* to describe some of their perceptions and experiences. While there are instances of mistreatment and bias, oppression and discrimination indicate a higher level of *systematic* mistreatment that is rationalized based on the dominant societal assumptions of a specific people group (New, 2011). Furthermore, although there is some evidence of negative evaluation of evangelical job candidates among sociologists (Yancy, 2011) and right-leaning job candidates among social psychologists (Inbar & Lammers, 2012), evidence of structural marginalization of evangelicals that would warrant claims of oppression and discrimination has not materialized in the research specific to counseling graduate programs.

Summary

Because faith development is situated within multicultural development, counseling students coming from white evangelical backgrounds or identifying with white evangelicalism may experience feelings of disorientation through their faith development as they progress through a CACREP-accredited program and learn multicultural competencies. The dominant values held by white evangelical culture are necessarily in conflict with the ACA *Code of Ethics* and multicultural vision for counseling in our pluralistic society. Although White evangelicals do not speak with one voice, White evangelicals, just like anyone from a cultural context, are socialized by their culture’s history and dominant values; they cannot escape being impacted by

forces of socialization. Counselor education faculty members also have a history of overlooking faith development and spiritual/religious competencies, meaning students feeling the tension between their faith and counseling identities will likely not receive adequate support in this area of professional identity development while enrolled in their programs. Furthermore, some White evangelicals perceive higher education as a place that is, to varying degrees, hostile and unwelcoming of their beliefs. These past experiences of mistreatment and/or the perception of hostility may hinder Christian students coming from white evangelical backgrounds from trusting professors and classmates to help resolve some of the faith disorientation they may feel in their faith and multicultural development.

Chapter III: Research Design

Pilot Study

When I first started this data collection process, I used a pilot study to test out different research inquiries, strategies, and methods to start uncovering the phenomenon of white evangelicalism in counselor education programs. The idea was for the pilot study to inform the rest of the dissertation and research question. In many ways, the pilot study provided an opportunity to explore various approaches to qualitative research and white evangelicalism in counselor education programs without fully committing to one specific path. This pilot study section details the research methods, results, and a discussion on how the study shaped the main focus and research methods moving forward.

Research Question

When I first conceptualized the idea of exploring faith disorientation experienced by students impacted by white evangelical culture, I thought I would recruit current White evangelical students to describe their experience at CACREP-accredited programs at secular institutions. But before starting with this inquiry, I first wanted to understand the context surrounding White evangelicals' decision to enroll in CACREP-accredited counseling programs, particularly at secular colleges and universities. This became a guiding research question for the pilot study:

> What factors influence White evangelicals to enroll in CACREP-accredited counseling programs at secular institutions?

Research Approach and Design

I used a multi-case study to describe and contextualize the phenomenon of White evangelical students' (WES) decision process for enrolling in a secular CACREP-accredited counseling program. Yin (2014) recommends using case studies to understand phenomena bounded within a specific context. In this way, case studies that explore a human phenomenon are trying to understand the participants' decisions that create the boundaries and contexts of

the phenomenon. Stated differently, case studies, when applied to human participants, are asking "how" questions (Yin, 2014). Although case studies can only have one participant or a singular case being observed, multi-case studies can be helpful to establish multivocality around a set of similar experiences and phenomena (Tracy, 2010; Yin, 2014). For this reason, I used a multi-case study approach to guide the methodology by collecting data from multiple participants—or multiple cases. Having multiple participants who share the experience of being a WES in a CACREP-accredited counseling program at a secular school but also have different positionalities (i.e., family background, geographical location, gender, socioeconomic status) will offer a variety of opinions and perspectives to shape the boundaries of the investigated phenomenon or case.

Positionality

In order to be transparent about my biases and bracket my values, I must acknowledge how my identity and personal history have shaped my perspective of this research (Tracy, 2010). I am a White, middle-class, heterosexual man who is a confessing Christian. My faith has gone through a process of moving from evangelical theological beliefs to a more theologically progressive paradigm. I attended a theologically conservative evangelical university and found myself critically engaging with my faith in a way that was unwelcomed by the social norms of the university. I started questioning the rigid gender roles of complementarianism, the hostility toward LGBTQ people, the literal interpretations of the Genesis account, examples of genocide in the Old Testament, and the belief in a "born again" conversion experience being the only type of salvation process. I continued with these questions and doubts even while staying involved in evangelical churches and organizations after my undergraduate years. When I started to think about master's programs, I knew I had to find a way out of the highly insular evangelical social circles, or I would be limiting my spiritual growth and connections to ideas outside of evangelicalism. For this reason, I chose to attend a Catholic school as my faith identity was important to me, but my evangelical identity felt tenuous. This tenuousness with my evangelical

identity reached a definitive breaking point the day after the election of Donald Trump in 2016. Seeing the exit poll data on White evangelicals confirmed years of pessimistic suspicions that evangelical culture cared more about power and influence than it did about loving people and caring for marginalized people. I decided that day that I could not in good conscience continue to identify as evangelical, work to reform evangelicalism, or work in evangelical institutions. The culture was, from my perspective, beyond repair, and I was no longer interested in working with others to save it from further demise.

After that point, I did not know where my faith was going to go, but I knew I was done compromising by participating in evangelical systems of sociopolitical oppression. My counselor training under a Marianist Catholic, social justice-laden university impacted the trajectory of my faith. This was a liberating process for me because many supervisors, professors, and staff opened my perspective up to see the rich spectrum of Christianity. Through these relationships, I learned there were beautiful, loving ways to exercise spirituality, understand scripture, and relate to God. I had the freedom to explore new ideas that were discouraged and considered “heretical” or “unorthodox” by my evangelical community. If I were to label my process of faith development, these would be the stages I moved through: doubt, disorientation, deconstruction, disillusionment, reconstruction, and forgiveness.

My faith development process is important to disclose because acknowledging my biases and bracketing my judgments during the research allows me to keep the open posture of curiosity and learning, which is foundational to qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). If left unchecked, my interpretation of my participants’ stories and experiences could be tainted in judgment, and I may make assumptions about my participants’ experiences that are not supported by the data. To help check my biases, I will utilize peer debriefing and reflexive journaling to better interrogate my thoughts, interpretations, and connections as I analyze the data.

In addition to this, I have thoughtfully considered the purpose of this study and how this research can be helpful for counselor educators, students, and clients. Although my faith may have taken more of a progressive turn, I do not assume a progressive faith is a marker for a positive faith trajectory or better clinical competency. My main reason for focusing on white evangelicalism is because I have the most personal experience with this social/religious system. I am both an insider and an outsider toward this religious and cultural demographic, which puts me in a unique position to analyze it. While I do believe the present evangelical culture in America exists in tension with the ACA *Code of Ethics* as evidenced by the literature mentioned previously, I do not assume that all self-identifying White evangelicals cannot be ethically and clinically competent counselors. Furthermore, I do not believe progressives or progressive Christians hold a more spiritually competent or ethical position in psychotherapy. Instead, I turn to Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development as a framework for developing critical thought, critical analysis, and ethical orthopraxy in students. Therefore, the implications of this research should focus on how to developmentally move students to higher stages of faith in order to cultivate greater awareness, compassion, and ethical clinical competencies. This focus keeps my goals grounded and biases in check.

Participants

The participants who consent to this study self-identified as White Christians and were enrolled in a master's-level, CACREP-accredited counseling program at a secular university. Because the definition of evangelicalism carries political connotations and many people are not aware of its specific theological criteria, I did not ask participants to self-identify as evangelical because some participants may not necessarily identify themselves with that title or may not even know how evangelicalism is defined. Instead, I categorically placed them in an evangelical definition by asking them if they agree with a statement that aligns with the Bebbington quadrilateral and other cultural/theological assumptions within evangelicalism (identifying with a

"born again" salvation experience and regarding the Bible as the ultimate source of truth). The following criteria statement must be agreed upon for students to participate:

> *Jesus is the only path to salvation, the Bible is the ultimate source of truth, I have the responsibility to share the Gospel with others in hopes that they become "born again" as Christians, and I have the responsibility to live out my faith in all areas of life.*

Because of the variation in pedagogy across counseling programs, limiting my focus on CACREP-accredited standards helps eliminate some variance in experiences across different institutions. Furthermore, CACREP standards intend to hold programs, students, and pedagogy accountable to the ACA *Code of Ethics* and the development of multicultural competencies (Smith & Okech, 2016). Investigating these counselor ethics and multicultural competencies within this multi-case study is critical to the context of the research questions given the literature presented earlier, which suggests there is a tense relationship between conservative Christian values and multicultural competencies.

Because I am interested in understanding some of the ways counseling ethics and competencies may cause some tension within White evangelical students, I limited my participant selection to only secular schools. Because secular schools, in theory, value pluralism and do not privilege one set of religious ideologies over another, there will likely be more challenges posed to White evangelical students that may not exist at religious schools that align with white evangelical values (Smith & Okech, 2016).

Sampling Strategies

Although no specific participant number is recommended for case studies, qualitative research with an *ideographic* aim tends to have smaller sample sizes (Smith et al., 2009). Idiographic research utilizes a small number of individual cases in order to allow participants to have a "locatable voice" (p. 29) as well as an intensive analysis of each case (Robinson, 2014), which fits the direction and purpose of this multi-case study. Robinson (2014) recommends 3-16 participants for ideographic research and suggests that the smaller end of this range be reserved for undergraduate projects and the bigger end for large-scale funded research. For this

reason, I recruited a sample of 3 participants for this research as the scale of this pilot study is purposely exploratory and small.

I used purposive sampling, which is a non-random method of sampling that ensures the participants meet the criteria set to best capture the investigated phenomenon or case (Robinson, 2014). After receiving approval from the institutional review board (IRB), I used professional counselor listservs, reached out to gatekeepers within counselor education who can recruit participants, and used social media posts across counseling groups as a way to cast a wide net across various CACREP-accredited counseling programs at secular institutions.

My informed consent let students know that I am interested in studying White Christian master's students' faith development process while enrolled in a secular CACREP-accredited counseling program and understanding their decision to enroll in their program. I also informed participants that their identities will be protected through pseudonyms and de-identification.

Data Collection and Sources of Data

To keep consistent with multi-case study methodology, Yin (2014) recommends gathering data from multiple sources to add credibility to the boundaries of the case and capture a holistic description of the phenomenon or issue being investigated. I collected my data through participant interviews, their personal statements used for admission, and Harris and Leak's (2013) Revised Faith Development Scale (RFDS), which measures spiritual/religious development across Fowler's (1981) faith development theory.

The RFDS is a brief questionnaire that is aligned with Fowler's (1981) faith development theory, and it uses a Likert scale (1-4) to assess the level of faith development across 16 questions (Harris & Leak, 2013) (See RFDS in Appendix B). An average score of 4 is the highest outcome and therefore suggests higher faith development, whereas an average score of 1 is the lowest outcome and suggests a lower faith development. The RFDS has undergone factor analysis and is considered a valid instrument for measuring faith development according to Fowler's theory (Harris & Leak, 2013).

Trustworthiness

As stated earlier, to gain a more holistic perspective of the studied issue, multiple sources of data provide a holistic contextualization. In addition to this holistic focus, multiple sources of data provide crystallization (Tracy, 2010). According to Tracy (2010), crystallization allows for various perspectives and truths to be displayed depending on one's angle and positioning. In this case, the diversity of data sources provides these multiple perspectives and underscores post-structural assumptions by illuminating various frames of reference, performative actions, and control based on the unique context of each data set (Ellingson, 2008). Unlike triangulation, which attempts to validate a singular truth through multiple sources of data confirming each other, crystallization seeks to develop a complex system of multiple and partial truths based on the perspectives and confines of each data source (Tracy, 2010). Crystallization creates more trustworthiness as it offers more perspectives without the agenda of arriving at a singular truth. In addition to crystallization, I used member checking, which allowed participants to review the transcriptions and address accuracy concerns.

Research Process

I answered the pilot study research question about WES motivations for enrolling in a counseling program at a secular intuition by analyzing participants' personal statements and facilitating a 30-minute interview. After obtaining permission to start this study through the IRB, I used the sampling strategy mentioned earlier to gather three participants. After the participants read through the informed consent document, they completed a brief demographic survey through Qualtrics, answered a few questions about their academic progress and program details, proximity to family and church, and frequency of church attendance (See appendix A). Additionally, I requested access to my participants' personal statements they used for admission to their respective counseling programs. Their personal statements prompted further discussion about their motivations in selecting their counseling program and how they present these motivations to faculty in their admissions process. Finally, I preemptively asked them to

complete the RFDS in preparation for completing phase two, which will focus on the second research question. After reviewing the themes in their personal statements, I interviewed the participants individually for 30 minutes and asked them about their motivations for enrolling in their program. I also asked about their decision to include or not include faith in their personal statement and how faith was discussed in their personal statement if it was discussed at all. Below are the interview questions investigating the pilot study research question:

- What led you to counseling as a profession?
- Tell me about your decision-making process for choosing a counseling program.
- What, if any, concerns do/did you have enrolling in your counseling program?
- In what ways did your faith play into these two decisions (choosing counseling as a profession and the selection of your program)?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share or something that I've missed in our discussion about program selection and motivations?

Data Analysis

After I transcribed the interviews, I thematically analyzed these data by highlighting common and unique themes through open coding (Braun & Clark, 2006). Additionally, I took field notes after participant interviews to document emerging themes and personal reflections as a means of establishing self-reflexivity and transparency around my biases, perspectives, and curiosities (Tracy, 2010). I used Atlas.ti to code these data from the two interviews and document multiple times, revise themes, and organize common themes under the superordinate themes (Miles et al., 2020). In this way, I re-coded the data by organizing similar themes around a broader theme that could connect their shared qualities, and the superordinate themes helped categorize these themes under an even broader perspective. Some of the coded data transcend more than one category and blend into other themes/superordinate themes. This transcendence supports the cohesiveness and interconnectedness of the data describing the investigated research questions and phenomenon.

Confidentiality

In order to protect the participants' confidentiality, I assigned pseudonyms in place of the participants' names. Additionally, I changed any specific names or places mentioned in their quotes to mitigate the risk of a reader triangulating these data and potentially identifying the participant. For this same reason, I did not quote any of the personal statements in the results section to prevent the participants' professors from cross-referencing the quotes with the documents, thereby revealing the participants' identities. Confidentiality is important to the research in order to minimize any risks to the participants, and it allows my participants the freedom to speak authentically about their experience without having to worry about how their responses may impact their relationships with professors, peers, and their community.

Pilot Study Results

After recruiting three participants, there were several common and divergent themes discussed in the interviews and in the personal statements. I used the pseudonyms Joel, Sarah, and Lindsey, to protect their identities. All participants met the criteria listed above. Below is a table providing a brief overview of the participants' contexts.

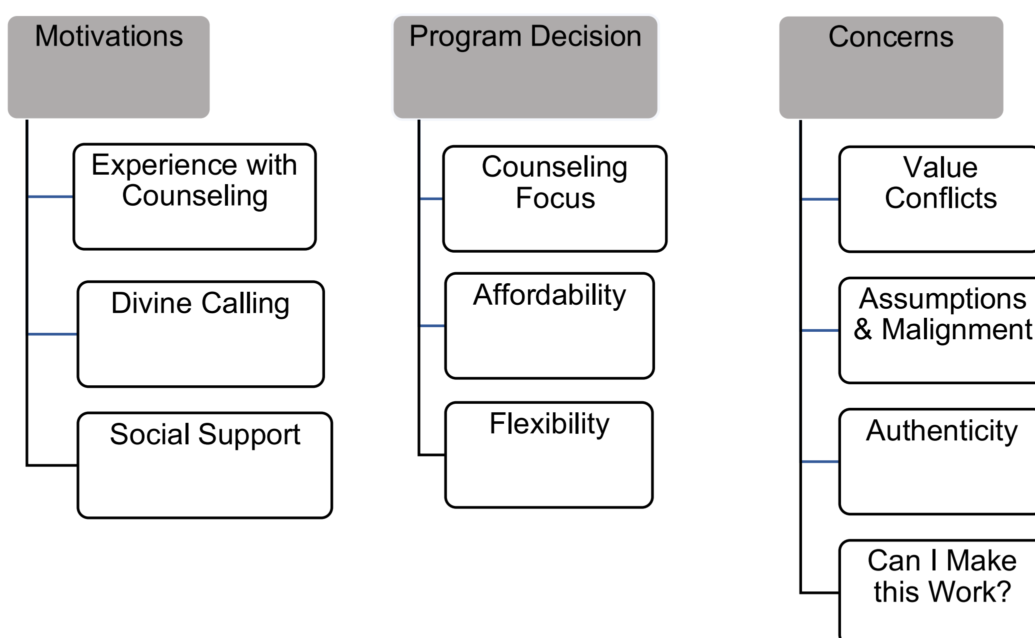
Table 2. Pilot Study Participants.

Name	Gender	Sexual orientation	Program information	Credits taken	Delivery	Church attendance	RFDS average
Joel	Man	Straight	CMHC, Midwest	0-9	Hybrid	1/week or more	2.375
Sarah	Woman	Asexual	CMHC, West	50-60	On-campus	1/week or more	2.5
Lindsey	Woman	Straight	SC, Southeast	10-19	On-campus	1/week or more	2.375

Note: SC = School Counseling and CMHC = Clinical Mental Health Counseling

After reviewing the participants' personal statements and interviewing them, I developed three superordinate themes: Motivations (what pulled them into counseling), Program Decision (how they selected their program), and Concerns (what was concerning about being a counseling student). All three superordinate themes have themes under them as shown by the chart below:

Figure 2. Pilot Study Themes.



Motivations

Experience with Counseling

All the participants either had experience providing some type of pseudo-counseling or being counseled themselves. For the participants providing some type of pseudo-counseling, they would either discuss the need to fill some type of systemic gap as a counselor that was not being addressed or a need to fulfill their own educational gap in counseling experience in order to provide better care. In the quote below, Lindsey discusses a need to fulfill a systemic gap in preparing high school students for college.

> So I teach a freshman orientation class … and over the years, I've seen a huge disconnect to what they anticipate college to be like versus the reality in college. And it's all stemming from what they're hearing in high school … but I still think that a lot of promise and progress can be made there.

Lindsey also said, “I counsel all the time, not officially … but I have students that come to me with issues and concerns, and that’s what we work through.” Similarly, Joel said he serves kids from a ministerial role and they are “asking questions” that are “pretty heavy for teenagers.” Joel mentioned listening to his church members' “family issues, sexual identity issues, drug addiction” and receiving some training in his fire department for processing through PTSD. He said he came to the realization that there are many people with “emotional and mental needs and struggles, and so I thought it would be wise to go and get a little more formal training in that.”

In contrast, Sarah did not mention any pseudo-counseling experience she provided, but she did describe benefiting from receiving counseling. She said she was “really impressed by seeing the work that my providers were doing and that potential for helping people, knowing how helpful it was for me.”

Divine Calling

Both Joel and Sarah mentioned feeling called by God to pursue counseling. Joel said, “The Lord has laid on me the desire to help these people, to help people in general.” He said he prayed about whether God was “leading” him or if he was “just imagining this.” For Joel, his ability and interest in counseling were evidence of a divine calling. Similarly, Sarah said, “And it felt like God’s leading to be like, ‘okay, here’s something you could do that would serve other people and be of good use.” In this way, Sarah’s divine calling was a call to serve others and do good.

Social Support

My participants mentioned social support as a form of motivation to pursue counseling. Some of these forms of social support felt like further spiritual influence or direction. Others

talked about mentors or people they respected, seeing their potential and confirming their decision to pursue counseling. Joel said he had "multiple conversations with Christians that I highly respect" and one of them was a cousin who said she had "been praying for you for years that you'd make this decision." Joel said he was "taken aback because we had never really talked about it" in previous conversations. He also talked with an "elder of our church" who he "trusted a lot," and the elder encouraged him to pursue counseling and said, "I would like to see you go to a Christian college." Similarly, Sarah described her "church community" as being "very supportive of me and my process."

Lindsey also described her social support, though she did not specify that it came from a confessing Christian. Lindsey said her advisor encouraged her, saying, "you really should go into the counseling program. You're very passionate about it." Lindsey said her advisor was right and that encouragement motivated her to move to a different master's program.

Program Decision

Counseling Focus

For two of my participants, their counseling focus helped narrow their program selection. In order to protect Sarah's anonymity, I am not disclosing what counseling focus helped limit her search because of its specificity, but her program was the only one in her area to have her counseling focus. Lindsey was "interested in going into a high school setting to do school counseling," which limited her search to school counseling programs.

Credibility

Credibility was a popular theme among all three of the participants. They all recognized the importance of accreditation to become licensed counselors. Sarah talked about how she selected her school because it was accredited. She admitted she did not have "much of an understanding of the importance of accreditation" at first, but she came to realize its importance later. Lindsey talked about inquiring about a school counseling job opening to see if someone unlicensed or in "the process" could apply, and the principal said, "you've got to be licensed."

This confirmed that “the need is there,” but she will need to be licensed before becoming a school counselor.

Joel spoke of how “we need more than a little bit of good advice based on God’s word, which is absolutely essential, but to have the letters after your name gives a little bit of credence to that as well.” Joel continued to discuss the importance of integrating biblical advice with empirical counseling modalities and dispelling myths that “every mental issue that you struggle with is simply because you’re not spiritual enough.” Joel also described his program as “reputable” and recently realized how important accreditation is. When discussing how his secular school’s affordability and flexibility trumped what was offered at Christian universities, he said, “all I need are the letters after my name that say I am accredited as a fill in the blank” as a way of communicating how licensure was more important to him than getting a Christian education. He also added that he could learn from “infinite” Christian resources outside of his secular program, making accreditation and licensure a higher priority than Christian education.

Affordability

The affordability of taking classes was also a factor for two of the participants. Lindsey talked about how she worked at the university, and she could take a certain number of credits for free each semester. Similarly, Joel said he was reimbursed through his employer. For Joel, the price of Christian schools deterred him from applying. He said, “Every Christian institution was easily 10 times the price.”

Flexibility

Joel was the only participant who mentioned flexibility as an important factor in his decision process. He is also the only person who chose a program that met both online and on-campus. In the quote below, he talks about the need for a program that can accommodate his unique firefighter schedule:

> I wanted to be online, so it'd be flexible. So when I'm out of town, for whatever reason, I don't have to worry about being in class. I don't want to worry about a class schedule.

> My schedule's kind of goofy anyhow. I'm on duty every third day, so it takes me out of going somewhere at that time. I just can't do it. So I needed it to be mostly online.

Concerns

Value Conflicts

Two of my participants, Joel and Sarah, discussed concerns over value conflicts between their education and faith. Joel discussed the possibly contentious material between faith and Freudian psychology, recognizing some of Freud's material as helpful and other aspects of it as "repulsive." He also talked about how some of the theories in modern psychology do not fit well with a biblical faith in this quote:

> …some of the theories behind modern psychology and counseling. What little bit I've looked into it. Some of those really don't jive… And they wouldn't mesh well with a biblical faith.

Sarah seemed to be still working out her value conflicts as she moved through the program, but she is feeling the tension between her faith community and her own "beliefs about social justice as a whole." This quote reflects this tension between her faith community and social justice principles:

> … a lot of people in my church are very like, oh, social justice and all that B.S. And I'm like… straddling these worlds, trying to figure out what different people mean by different terms, because even like the term social justice, I think as such I would say absolutely it's justice and it's social. What more can you ask for? But I think people also have a point about how the term is not always used the way it appears on the surface. And then—I then—I begin to get into like, okay, I want to—I want to maintain my orientation towards the truth. But I also think that it's very important to be socially active and in the justice realm and supporting people. So I try to figure out how to do that without offending people but also without compromising.

Assumptions & Malignment

Again, Joel and Sarah had concerns over how Christians might be perceived in their counseling program and a secular institution. Sarah discussed feeling like an outsider and prejudged because of her faith as well as wondering what it would be like to feel comfortable at a Christian school:

> I wouldn't say that it's like hostile towards faith, but there's definitely—or at least the Christian faith—there's definitely a trend of, you know, assumptions that get made about you if you… reveal that you're a Christian. And I've heard a couple stories even about professors kind of acting unprofessionally or meanly towards students on that account. So I was like, you know, maybe it'd be nice to be in an environment where that was kind of the expectation rather than the anomaly.

Sarah continued to discuss some of the common assumptions people at her institution may make of Christians in this quote:

> I think some of them would be that… you don't stand for social justice, that you're going to be a bigot, that you are just kind of parroting the normative paradigm of some sort and not thinking for yourself. Yeah, I think it mostly boils down to, like, assuming you're a bigot and even, this might be me, but I feel like there's even kind of an intelligence judgment, like, okay, you haven't thought your way out of that yet. That's a little sad.

Joel also said, "I've had friends that have taught in a public university as believers, and they were not treated well, frankly. I mean, they were just maligned." He continued saying:

> "my people are not really well-respected in a lot of ways and not liked, even. And in some ways, I've seen and experienced a little bit myself. They're treated with contempt and bitterness. There's a lot of misunderstandings and misgivings.

In the quote below, Joel mentioned one of the assumptions people make is the belief that science is at odds with the Bible or that faith is "blind" or "ignoring evidence":

> I was asked, do you believe that the Bible and science have to be at odds? And I said absolutely not… obviously [counseling] is a science… I don't disagree with science, but I don't agree with every facet of it either… Another one is, I guess you could call it a myth, that my faith is blind and I ignore evidence, and it's frankly the exact opposite. It's fully taking on evidences and making a decision based off of that and pursuing faith. Faith is not blind leaping. It's only as good as what you place it in. If you're sitting in a four-legged chair and you think it's fine, but somebody cut the one leg out from under it. Your faith wasn't that good because what you put your faith in didn't hold up… I can with confidence say that what I put my faith and trust in is 100 percent believable.

Authenticity

Two of the participants, Joel and Sarah, discussed the importance of disclosing their Christian identity in their personal statements. Their disclosure was partially strategic in giving professors an opportunity to know who they are in advance. In this way, Joel and Sarah hope

that by disclosing their faith identity ahead of time, there may be fewer surprises and more understanding between them and their professors. Joel described his decision to disclose his faith identity in this quote:

> Part of it is to set people at ease… I don't want the institution I'm looking at to pull any punches with me. I need you to tell me what I've got to expect because I've got a lot to take on. I mean, this is one more thing on a very, very full plate that I've got. If you're pulling punches with me, I can't handle that… I got to know what we're getting into here. and vice versa if they think they're—you know—what kind of student are you getting? And I, again, I don't want to be dishonest. And I think, like I said, I want to be very transparent with it. Plus, as a believer, we were called to not be ashamed, but that also comes with wisdom and grace, too. So I will tell you, this is who I am again. It's to be forthright and let you know this is kind of what you're dealing with when you come to me and you're allowing me to attend the school. And so this is the perspective that I'm going to bring in with me now. My hope is that I can dispel myths and I can help them to see that, you know, we're not a bunch of fruitcakes.

Similarly, Sarah did not want her faith to be something that she would have to hide while in graduate school, and if it was something she had to hide, she would rather be denied admission right away. She describes this decision in the quote below:

> I didn't want to feel like [faith] was something I had to, you know, completely hide for the next however many years. It's kind of like when I applied for undergrad… I didn't get into my dream school. I got into another school that I was very happy and, in the end, I felt better about than I would have about the first school. But I think I assume that part of it had to do with my—one of the short essays that I wrote for the Common Application that was very much looking back in the style of the school I went to and less on the style of the school I thought I wanted to go to. And I'm really happy about that because I ended up somewhere that appreciated, you know, how I wanted to show up and I wasn't trying to fit into a different box. And I think that was that was an influence and deciding to include that in the personal statement was like, okay ... if this is a deal-breaker for them, then I need to put it on the table now.

"Can I Make This Work?"

The in-vivo code "Can I make this work" came up as a common theme for all my participants. "Can I make this work?" embodied concerns over the sacrifice of time and energy for both Joel and Lindsey. Both work full-time jobs, have families, and so committing to a long-term program weighed on them. Lindsey communicated this sacrifice in the following quote:

> I'm trying to totally balance that out and not miss their lives [her children] and not miss my relationship with my husband as well. I take—I'm taking a class in the fall on Mondays and Wednesdays, and my daughter's one day—one night—off of the week is Wednesdays. I hate that. But it's going to be okay, you know. But I have to really—I had to weigh you—to weigh a lot of options when you're in a position like I am.

Lindsey continued discussing the importance of "faith" not as an identity but as an action. She equated faith as an act of trust that she could make this sacrifice.

Similarly, Joel discussed the sacrifice of his schedule and balancing all of his responsibilities to fit the pace of graduate school in this quote:

> My next biggest concern was really the schedule. Can I make this work? And so in the first interview I had with them… after the initial letter… extending acceptance… I said I don't see any reason I can't make this work. I said, but, you know, I—this is where I'm going to ask you guys to exercise some grace because I got to have time to make plans, make arrangements and stuff. And they were very—they were confident that we could make that work. So those were a couple of concerns. Time commitment was another one, a personal concern. Can I really do this?

Sarah's "Can I make this work?" moment was more equated with concerns over the newness of graduate school. She summarized these feelings in this quote:

> I had no idea what I was doing when I was getting ready to apply. No idea. Neither of my parents graduated high school. So this is all kind of new. My brother has done some higher education. But, you know, grad school is kind of foreign as far as my concept of the world.

Age

Lindsey and Joel both mentioned their age as a concern. Both have been out of school for several years, and they had some concerns about going back to school. Joel summarized this concern in this quote:

> Because I've been out of college for 20 some years now… going back to school is a little daunting… So yeah, going into it, I was concerned… And then on top of that, my GPA at that time was not real great, young and young and dumb and did other things rather than study as well as I should have.

Lindsey expressed her concern saying, “I’m old. I’m not fresh out of college or have one or two years of other experiences in actual college counseling sessions like some people have had.” She said she feels like her “experience is different from everyone else’s” and worries she’ll have a “hard time kind of building relationships.”

Refocusing and Foundational Study Design

After piloting the initial research question with three participants, I made a few changes to the main study. Because this research is primarily concerned with the intersection of faith development, multicultural development, and white evangelicalism, it seemed relevant to gather participants who had already undergone their developmental training as counseling students. This is not to say that counselors are done developing after they graduate, but they certainly have had more opportunities and, hopefully, developmental growth after finishing their counseling programs. Additionally, this research suggests evangelical culture adversely impacts, at least on some level, the faith and, therefore, the multicultural development of those socialized by it. Therefore, the most appropriate participants to speak to the purpose of this research were counseling graduates who have critically examined white evangelical socialization and who are ostensibly moving beyond its multicultural and faith limitations. Given this observation, I refocused the participant criteria and adjusted the inquiry slightly, reflecting the purpose and outline described in Chapter I. This refocus explores the faith disorientation and/or resolution of students coming from white evangelical backgrounds but through the lens of White Christian post-evangelical counselors. Having already been through their counseling program and moving from an evangelical to a non-evangelical identity, these participants were able to share their stories retrospectively, which may provide more clarity and/or continuity to their process and how they make meaning out of their faith disorientation stories. The foundational research question is below:

> How do White post-evangelical Christian counselors experience faith disorientation and/or resolution while enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counseling program?

I opened the institutional type to any CACREP-accredited program—religious or nonreligious. Since the participant criteria include the development from evangelical to non-evangelical identity, the institutional type is insignificant because this group of participants will likely encounter tension at either type of institution. The institutional community's reaction toward students coming from white evangelical backgrounds at various stages of evangelical de-identification is worth exploring in all types of parochial or public colleges and universities.

In addition to changing the participant criteria, my demographic questions were altered slightly by asking what, if any, church denomination my participants attended, their age, school affiliation type, and whether they were mainline Protestant or Catholic. I also did not collect personal statements, as this was less relevant to the foundational research question. Furthermore, the interview was extended to an hour and a half in order to uncover a more comprehensive understanding of themes relevant to the foundational research question. Using a semi-structured interview, I asked the participants the following questions:

- How did your background with evangelicalism impact your training as a counseling student?
- How would you define evangelicalism, and what does the term mean to you?
- How has your faith evolved over time? Over graduate school in counseling?
- What, if any, experiences within your counseling program challenged/affirmed your faith values? How do you work through some of these challenges?
- What similarities and differences exist between evangelical culture and counseling values? What impact did those differences have on you?
- Tell me about your evangelical community during your counseling program. How would you describe them?
- How did they respond to your faith development while in the counseling program?
- How did your evangelical background impact your relationships with your counseling community (peers, professors, supervisors, and clients) during grad school?

- What metaphor would you use to describe what it is like being a Christian impacted by evangelicalism in your counseling program?
- What, if anything, would you like your peers and professors to know about your faith process during your time in the counseling program?
- Are there any other questions I should ask that I might have missed?

After making an amendment to the methods in the IRB application, I received IRB approval and recruited six participants. Per the sampling research cited earlier, this number of participants is reasonable given the scale of this research. Aside from the changes to the research question, participant selection, allotted interview time, and interview questions, the recruitment strategy, trustworthiness, and interview data analysis outlined earlier remained the same.

Chapter IV: Results

Each of the six participants offered varied perspectives on their faith disorientation and/or resolution as they reflected on their student experience in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. Participants were also at different stages of evangelical identification during their counseling program. David, Jane, and Elizabeth entered their counseling programs while identifying as evangelical and began to shed that identity as they progressed through their program. April, Ann, and Jessica stopped identifying with evangelicalism well before they started their counseling programs. Below is a table highlighting several participant demographic variables and their score on the RDFS.

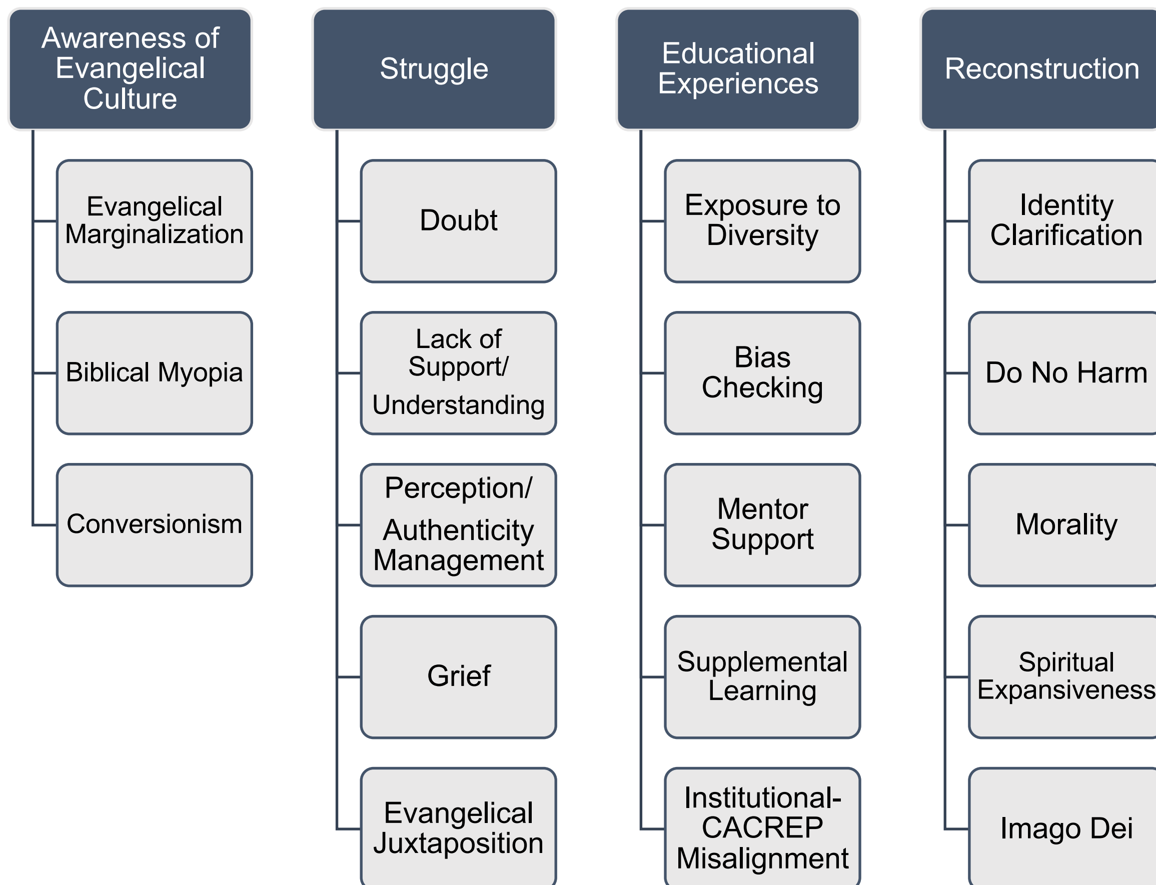
Table 3. Main Study Participants.

	Jane	David	Elizabeth	Ann	Jessica	April
School Type	Catholic	Protestant	Protestant	Protestant	Protestant	Public
Program Type	CMHC	CMHC	CMHC	CMHC	CMHC	SC/CMHC
School Location	Southeast	Southeast	Northeast	Midwest	Southeast	Southeast
Age	24	29	53	56	40	35
Sexual Orientation	Straight	Straight	Straight	Straight	Straight	Straight
Gender	Woman	Man	Woman	Woman	Woman	Woman
Christian Identification	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Mainline Protestant
Current Church Denomination	Catholic	Anglican	Presbyterian	Baptist	Episcopalian	N/A
Frequency of Church Attendance	1/week or more	1/week or more	1/week or more	Less than once a month	Less than once a month	Never
RFDS	2.6875	3.125	3.0625	2.9375	3.375	3.4375

Note: SC = School Counseling and CMHC = Clinical Mental Health Counseling

These data surfaced four superordinate themes: Awareness of Evangelical Culture, Struggle, Educational Experiences, and Reconstruction. Under those superordinate themes are common themes discussed by participants. Several themes and quotes expressed qualities of multiple superordinate themes or other common themes, which demonstrates the interconnected nature of each case and experience. These superordinate themes are organized intentionally to best synthesize these data and assist the flow of the results. However, this organization does not imply that participants followed a specific path of graduating from one superordinate theme to the next. This is not a theoretical model for faith development in each participant's case.

Figure 3. Main Study Themes.



Awareness of Evangelical Culture

All participants expressed varying levels of awareness of evangelical culture and its impact on themselves and others, especially marginalized communities. For those who began to move away from evangelicalism during their counseling program, this awareness began unraveling evangelical culture as their counselor identity formed during graduate school. These participants started noticing an unreconcilable dichotomy between their developing counselor identity and evangelical culture/identity. David, who no longer identifies as an evangelical but referred to himself as "a recovering evangelical," described his awareness of evangelical culture metaphorically, saying: "Say you eat a bunch of lasagna and then you get a stomach virus, and now you just don't like lasagna anymore… I ate a lot of lasagna, I threw it up, and I don't like it anymore." In other words, some of this awareness, or stepping away from, evangelicalism gave them a better understanding of what they wanted to leave behind from evangelical culture.

Evangelical Marginalization

All the participants became aware of evangelical culture's propensity to insulate and exclude others, especially marginalized populations, from outside the evangelical community. All participants mentioned LGBTQ people as a population marginalized by evangelicalism. Women and Black people were also mentioned as populations marginalized by evangelicalism by five and three participants, respectively. All participants mentioned the lack of diversity within evangelicalism as a contributing factor to its culture of exclusion. Jane summarized evangelicalism as a "very insular" community. She continued saying, "My evangelical background was very—it's going to sound really negative. ... But the other people that were different from me were wrong in some way. I think that that was kind of prevalent." David described the insular nature of evangelical culture this way:

> I think I identified as an evangelical strongly when everybody in my social circles were exactly like me. We all thought the same way. It became an echo chamber or a bubble, and we weren't exposed to anything else. And then this narrative that is taught in a lot of evangelical churches or affiliations is that we have us and we have the world, and the things in the world are bad things and the things in here are good things. And so I got

> really invested emotionally in a lot of those things that we would say are the world and saw that they were good.

LGBTQ People

David noticed within his counseling program how LGBTQ people were actively discriminated against by evangelical counselors and evangelical counseling institutions. David said he saw state-sanctioned discrimination against LGBTQ people by allowing counselors to refer clients to other counselors based on client-counselor value incongruencies. Additionally, he said he noticed how evangelical counseling practices advertise their beliefs around marriage and sexuality, which effectively turns away LGBTQ clients seeking their mental health services. In the following separate statements, David summarized his awareness of these practices and how they did not align with ethical multicultural counseling practice:

> I think about—like a big thing is the ACA code of Ethics, of course, and things like values … and, you know, not referring out on the basis of value, conflicts. … But at the state I was practicing and since I moved here, they passed a law that mental health professionals can legally refer on the basis of value conflicts, which is quite dangerous, I think. ... So it's a basically a discriminatory law so that an evangelical Christian can refer LGBTQ folks is essentially what that is. It's just masquerading as value conflicts … [There are] times where ethical practice and … laws, just disalign. So I think that some parts of, like, evangelical culture can align okay with counseling values. But I think a lot of it is—it's kind of disaligned. There's a lot of—the discrimination of evangelical culture just doesn't align with like good practice. … It just—as counselors, we are supposed to be trained to be competent with just about everybody. … We might specialize in different things, but we should be competent to work with people of different cultures and values.
>
> There was one [faith statement] I can think of in the practice that I worked at after my master's program. And one of the things was that we believe that God created us as … God created man and woman to live together in harmony and things like that. And we believe that this is the best. Something like this is the best way a relationship can function. I can't remember the exact wording, but I was like, “That's kind of yucky to me.” And it wasn't saying we'll—explicitly, “We're going to turn you away if you are a gay couple.” But if this is kind of stated at our practice, like kind of the strategy here is [if] this is what we're stating, then maybe the gay couples might not come here in the first place. So it wasn't turning them away per se, but it's just the way that their posture was to … very clearly market to a very specific group of people.

Another way this marginalization manifests is by pathologizing people’s gender identity or sexual orientation. David and Jessica noticed how evangelical culture attributed poor mental

health outcomes to one's sexual or gender identity rather than the sociopolitical or other factors that contribute to mental, emotional, and relational distress. Jessica, who had long since identified as post-evangelical by this point, spoke about an instance where she saw this happen in her classroom:

> Somebody kept calling it transsexualism and was talking about the diagnosis. And my orientation is shockingly staunchly feminist. I believe that diagnoses are not meant to save the person, but to put them in a box and perhaps pay a claim and just arguing against, you know, it's not a disorder. ... And some people may have dysphoria, but some people also have euphoria, some people never have dysphoria, but you know, they're just looking at me like "What?" Like, they could not get out of [the mindset that] "this person is mentally ill." They might be, but that has nothing to do with them being trans.

Black People

Three participants talked about Black people being marginalized by evangelical culture. Elizabeth said she agreed with the adage: "the most segregated place in America is church on Sunday morning." When asked about how she would describe that segregation in evangelicalism specifically, she responded, "I think we always want to place ourself in a group that's slightly above, higher status" and said there is a "presumed superiority," which is often denied by White evangelicals. Jessica described white supremacy among White Christians and White evangelicals this way:

> These same people believe in things like the welfare myth or that murder is done by African Americans more. You know, those are false but widely perpetuated. So in their understanding, White people were born better than people of color, and I think that that is a very widely held but not explicitly stated viewpoint of White Christians and White evangelicals.

David did not mention white evangelicalism's current marginalization of Black people, but he historically contextualized white evangelicalism and, more broadly, Western Christianity as a mechanism of enslavement, colonialism, and Christian nationalism. He summarized this historical oppression this way:

> Christianity is very intertwined with Western culture, but also this idea of empire that, especially historically, where the Christian church was the superpower in the world and

> scripture was referred to for a lot of things to condone slavery, condone colonialism, to condone atrocious treatment of people from other cultures. And they were preaching and believe that they had God on their side to do all of this stuff. … A lot of those values and Christianity are just really intertwined to, you know, if you want to maintain power and you create a Christian nation and the powers that be want to maintain that power, a lot of that is done through how they perceive and talk about their religion and in their culture. … If I wanted to maintain control of the folks that I have colonized or conquered, to tell them, you have to do all of these things or else you're going to hell. I mean, there's like a lot of fear there where if people are afraid they'll do what I want them to do.

Women

April, Elizabeth, Jessica, David, and Ann all discussed how evangelical culture limits women's responsibilities, engagement, leadership, and voice, especially as it relates to church leadership. David, who no longer believes in patriarchal church leadership, referenced these evangelical beliefs saying, "females can't be pastors or if they are in leadership, they should be over women's ministry or children's ministry, but not over any men." However, several participants, Ann, Jessica, April, and Elizabeth, extended this limitation beyond the church and said evangelicalism more broadly teaches women to be deferential, not establish boundaries in relationships, be nurturing over assertive, and limit expressions of anger or authority. For Jessica, she said acting against these evangelical constructs around gender has helped her be a better therapist. As a therapist, she said that to establish credibility with clients, especially as it relates to her communication around her expertise and nonjudgmental attitude, "you have to have a pretty strong amount of self-certainty and authority even to say that and have it be believable."

Ann said she experienced this sexism in evangelical spaces and attributed some of its etiology to how women were portrayed in scripture, saying, "And even reading in the Bible, women were really nothing. It was the men who were the important ones. We weren't important. We were just there to make babies and do their bidding." Ann said she stayed silent for years after experiencing sexual abuse in and outside of the church, and evangelical gender dynamics impacted her reservations about coming forward and talking about it. She said, "How I see

women's roles and men's roles—men were the be-all, end-all. So it didn't matter what the woman said. It was—you were shut down, and it didn't matter."

Elizabeth said she experienced sexism from women in the church over her role as a counselor working with incarcerated men and how she presented herself. In the following statement, she discussed how the women she interacted with prioritized church authority to send counselors to men's prisons over personal career choices and educational qualifications:

> We were on a study trip to Greece and Turkey, and there were probably a half a dozen older conservative Christian women. And this is the response I got from them: "Do you always wear toe rings? Do you always get your fingernails and toenails done? Are you even qualified to work in a men's prison?" I'm like, "yes." [They said,] "Well, women just wouldn't do those things in our denomination. We would never send somebody in our denomination into work in that environment." I said, "My denomination didn't send me. I'm qualified."

Biblical Myopia

All the participants identified how evangelical culture often lacks openness to other ideas and perspectives. Five of the participants attributed this myopia to the evangelical culture's lack of awareness of their history and positionality. These five participants mentioned how evangelicals often read the Bible literally and believe their interpretations are true and without error. These participants all talked about how this belief contributes to either a lack of cultural humility and a lack of awareness of evangelical positionality/history. Jane said, "Evangelicalism is kind of the most modern Western, heavily-American influenced branch, I guess, of Christianity. ... I guess very insular. Not as open to other forms of Christianity." In three separate statements, David talked about the evangelical perspective of biblical inerrancy, the Western positionality of evangelical culture, and how he evolved in his faith:

> So if we believe in inerrancy and we believe like that, what we—the scriptures that we have compiled are truly the accurate reflection of what God intended us to know about, even if that is true, a lot of the Bible was written as, like, poetry, and so it's still open to interpretation. You know, so it really is—rubs me the wrong way when folks will say, like, well, scripture clearly states blah blah blah blah. Whereas I think it's more helpful to say my interpretation of this scripture to me, it says blah blah blah … because we have said this, the Bible, this compilation of scripture, is capital "T" Truth, what God wanted us to know about him and the biblical story. And so, if that's true, when we don't do the things

> that … the Bible is talking about, that means really bad things for you. So I think inerrancy, just the idea that has been used to—it's done a lot of damage.
>
> You know, I just think it's arrogant for anyone, you know, denomination or person to say, [over] the two thousand years of Christian history, the Southern Baptists in the United States are the ones that got it right.
>
> So my faith has evolved in that I do still identify as Christian, believe in the death of Jesus and the resurrection. ... I do believe that that happened. But I, a lot of the things that go along with—with Christianity are very kind of conflagrated [sic] with Western culture.

Similarly, Elizabeth described evangelical culture’s biblical myopia, evangelical history, doctrine, and the perception of historical authority in these statements:

> I think it's closed-minded as a whole. I don't want to generalize too much, but I think that when you get into those ultimately conservative doctrines, there's a presumption that their interpretation of the Bible is correct. … They have the answer to how you're going to get to heaven and nobody else can possibly be right, and I don't agree with that.
>
> [Evangelicalism is] sort of a reformed movement that's almost a reformation of the Reformation. And that there were movements that happened here in the United States that started that evangelical movement. And … what's evolved from that is an ultra-conservative sort of doctrine that doesn't allow much leeway for interpretation, for spiritual expression and—and almost in a backlash of Catholicism.
>
> But I think there's a perception of disconnect between conservative evangelicalism that thinks that they're holding on to something that was a tradition that wasn't.

For Jane, as she began to realize the evangelical doctrine and interpretation of scripture was not as historical as she originally thought, this created more room for her to consider other ways of understanding her faith. She summarized this awareness this way:

> [In evangelicalism] you can understand the Bible if you just sit down and read it. [But] there has to be something more than that. Also seeing a lot of just, like, Americanism, the nationalism type stuff in the evangelical spheres that I think start asking some of those questions of, like, how is the church structured and governed and where do we get these various teachings on salvation from?

Conversionism

Two participants, Jane and David, noticed that the value of conversionism and how it is often applied in evangelicalism did not align with counseling ethics. Another participant, Ann, did not talk specifically about conversionism, but she did discuss how the evangelical imposition of religious beliefs, which is tied to Jane and David’s experience of evangelical conversionism, is

also not good counseling practice, saying, “In the evangelical world, we try to sway people to what we believe is right, and with counseling, you can't.”

David discussed his awareness of this misalignment between evangelical conversionism and counseling practice in these two quotes:

> At the beginning, when I was still pretty strongly evangelical, [that was] frustrating and challenging just because like, you know, you say you want to work on depression, but were like, what I know you really need is a like a better relationship with Jesus. But because of my role in my code of ethics, I can't really do that. And so that felt frustrating. So I guess now it just sounds absolutely preposterous as I reflect on it. I think that was challenging and frustrating towards the beginning. But as I kept meeting with people and having conversations with my supervisor, just reading from, you know, different resources and things like that, it absolutely felt a lot more liberating than anything else as the process went on.
>
> An evangelical might say, the best counseling is Christian counseling, you know, it's better to be a Christian counselor. It's not good enough to be a counselor who is Christian, like a mental health counselor first. [From the evangelical perspective], if you really wanted to love people, well, you'd be like a biblical counselor and have lots of discussions about faith in counseling and read scripture and things like that. ... So I think in that kind of way, it's pretty disaligned, between the two [conversionism and mental health counseling]. I am, you know, mental health counselor identity first.

Jane had a similar awareness of how conversionism does not align with ethical practice, saying:

> I realized how much evangelical culture is: I want to get to know somebody so they'll convert. So that they will just come to agree with me rather than [the] kind of counseling values of: Your story is inherently valuable, that I don't necessarily have the solution for you. I just have a space for us to process what that solution could look like. That kind of openness, I think, was very conflicting.
>
> I think that the more I heard about and believed, I think there is more, like, coming to terms with what I really believed like that. Yeah, those things about, like, people having inherent value that I realized how much of evangelical culture was like, you have value because you could be another person to convert. And that just became more and more stark to me that I don't believe that, but I really do think that I have close friends [who], if not, like, myself at some point, saw people as kind of projects. And that you're not going to really make it very far in counseling if you see people that way because they're not interested in being your project. So I guess the conflict was kind of an eye-opener that this thing that I'm getting further and further away from—not only is it “oh, it's just different because I think differently than these people,” but like, “oh, I actually think that that's pretty bad.” Or at least, like in particular, that that segment—I don't think that all of evangelicalism is that, but that's particularly problematic.

Additionally, as Jane moved toward her Catholic identity, she began to contextualize the evangelical view of salvation as an "individualistic" process that holds the proof of salvation in an individual's declaration of beliefs or statement of faith. However, she said Catholicism, which is "very historic," understands salvation much differently and offers room for non-Christians to receive salvation.

Struggle

All participants described a type of relational or internal struggle after or as they began to shed their evangelical identity. Some participants described their process of doubt and uncertainty over evangelical beliefs. They also discussed a lack of support and/or understanding from their counseling or evangelical community. Additionally, they struggled to manage others' perceptions of them and be completely authentic with others, given their changing identity and the assumptions people had of their religious history. Some participants described a period or process of grief in their relationships with their evangelical family and community. Finally, some participants highlighted a juxtaposition between the evangelical culture and a few close evangelical individuals they admired.

Doubt

Jane and David, the two participants who began to shift away from their evangelical identity during their master's program, discussed periods of doubt as they began to deconstruct theological assumptions tethered to their evangelical background. The other participants, except Elizabeth, talked about their religious doubts as well, but this happened prior to starting their graduate program. Both Jane and David often mentioned how their theological questions were not welcome within their evangelical community, and they had to look outside their faith community at that time for support.

Jane described her experience of asking questions as she began to move from an evangelical to a Catholic identity. She talked about struggling through the competing answers

evangelicalism and Catholicism gave her and learning to tolerate not arriving at any decisive conclusion. She expressed this feeling in the following quote:

> I guess, kind of an image that I thought of a number of times during that period and since is kind of, so dramatic, but kind of like drowning in that it just seemed like there are so many questions and so many voices saying, like, this is what's right that we're often in, like, as polar opposite as you can be and still be Christian. But it felt like kind of drowning to figure out, like, “Okay, what do I think? Who do I believe God is? What do I think that God is directing me in?” That it just kind of feels oppressive. And then kind of discovering at the end of it that you can breathe underwater. All of these questions, they don't necessarily go away. A lot of the big ones like “Where does God want me to be?” get answered in the Catholic Church. That type of thing gets answered, but that ultimately, I can keep all these questions. I can keep wrestling with all of them. And still survive, I can still breathe in all of this.

David said he began to question his evangelical beliefs surrounding marriage and sexual orientation during his master’s program. While there were a few educational moments that led him to this place of doubt, he said most of his doubt came as he began to develop relationships with gay clients in his clinical internship. His doubts also arose as he began to see the incongruencies between what he heard about gay people from his evangelical community and what he witnessed in his clinical practice. He also described how the act of moving from a definitive evangelical answer about sexual identity/expression to an expression of uncertainty was a momentous and risky move to take within the context of his evangelical community. For David, this moment of doubt opened the door for him to move to gay-affirming practice.

> So it really kind of started to come alive for me in my internship—in my master's program where I'm like, “Hold on. I'm not sure that I believe all of this stuff quite as strongly as I used to.” I certainly—like, my kind of deconstruction process really kind of came alive after my master's program, when I was really in practice, but that's really kind of where it started, where it's—you know, things started to feel incongruent with what I was taught growing up and then what I was seeing in my practice.
>
> I had this experience of like, you know, somebody asked me if I think that homosexuality is inherently wrong or sinful. I would say, “I don't know.” And that wasn't a question for me before ... and just like even having that response of like, “I don't know,” is like, totally scandalous. And I would say now, I say, “No, I don't. I don't believe that it is inherently sinful.” … But anyway, so I remember that was there was a lot of tension there again because I was existing in these spaces where that questioning was frowned upon. So that was really challenging.

Lack of Support/Understanding

All the participants mentioned a lack of support/understanding surrounding their faith development. Additionally, all participants expressed that they felt a lack of support/understanding from their evangelical community, which included family members, friends, and peers. Jane and Ann specifically mentioned a lack of support/understanding from counselor educators. The general lack of support/understanding was felt mostly surrounding their spiritual development. From the participants' perspectives, either counselor educators did not know how to engage them as they began to struggle through new stages of faith, or their evangelical community was a source of resistance to their faith development and/or counseling development.

From Their Evangelical Community

In the following statement, David describes a perspective his evangelical community has on mental health and the purpose of counseling, which, according to his evangelical community, is to bring clients closer to God. As David began to develop his focus as a trauma counselor, he said he received pushback from his evangelical community as they began to realize David's orientation around counseling had nothing to do with conversionism. Through this pushback, David describes feeling invalidated and a general lack of curiosity from his evangelical community. He also talked about a split his evangelical community made between "us and the world" and encouraged him to come back to the evangelical community. In two separate statements David summarized this lack of support this way:

> It felt pretty shitty; it felt pretty bad. Yeah, it was—like, that my experience was not valid as much because your focus is off. And so, it's not a worthwhile or good or noble pursuit to help people heal from trauma. And that's all you do. And it's only a good and noble pursuit if you do that because you want to lead them to the Lord. And so that right—it felt, like, annoying because it was like, I know exactly what you're doing, but it's just—there was no space for conversation or dialog. They would say things to remind me, but were not ever really interested and like, "Why do you think that way?" You know, "I would love to learn from you about, you know, these things that you know, these differences and beliefs" because they didn't really, again, didn't really want to know.

> I think there is this belief [from my evangelical community] that if we say something enough, you'll start to come back. [They would say], "I think you're getting away from your roots and what the real mission that we had as Christians. And so if I [referencing his evangelical community] keep reiterating how important it is to lead people to Jesus, then maybe you'll, like, come back around to it." It's like you go into these [evangelical] spaces, [and] it's like, "Oh, you just kind of forgot about it. So let me remind you how important this is." Whereas, I would have conversations with them like, I'm interested in helping people heal, like, just because I want to help people heal, because that's a good thing to do. That is right. And not the purpose of, like, healing so that you can then convert to Christianity, for instance. … I think [in my evangelical community] there was a bit of that—a course correction like you're stepping too much into the world, like, as I talked about earlier, like they have us and you have the world. And so a lot of these things that you're saying now are things that somebody who is of the world would say.

Jane had a similar response from her evangelical community. Though when she spoke of a lack of support/understanding, she discussed this mostly regarding her decision to leave evangelicalism and become Catholic. She said her evangelical community largely did not understand why she asked the questions that challenged the structure of the evangelical church, biblical interpretation, and salvation. She said some of her evangelical community would say things like, "because I love you, I want to say that I'm a little concerned about what's happening in your faith, life, and the direction that you're moving in" and would say she has abandoned Christianity for Catholicism as if those were mutually exclusive identities.

April discussed feeling lost and questioning her faith identity due to the response she received from her family. From her family's perspective, the Bible had a clear position about not supporting same-sex relationships, and to not follow that position would be putting your faith in jeopardy. She summarized this in the following quote:

> Honestly, I think the biggest part of feeling lost or questioning is how upset my family was with me. And the pressure from my family of "why aren't you going to church? We looked on Google and found some churches in your area; here's the service information. What do you mean, you support homosexuality? ... You're not a good Christian if this is what you're doing. Obviously, you can't believe in God because you're not following the Bible."
>
> April also discussed how her father did not support her going into counseling, saying:
>
> My dad also didn't believe in counseling, so the fact that I was in a counseling program, like, when I went to [name of university] for psychology, he told me I'd never get a job. It was a useless degree, like blah blah blah. And then when I went for my masters, it was the same but worse.

When asked about why her father did not believe in counseling and what they thought of mental health, she replied:

> They believe mental health exists like depression exists, anxiety exists. Yeah, but it's not something you go to for, like, actual treatment for, like you don't take meds or, like, go to actual therapy. What you do is you go to the pastor, and you pray about it and then God magically takes it away. And if he doesn't, then you're just not being a good enough Christian.

From Their Counseling Community

In addition to the lack of support/understanding participants received from their evangelical community, Jane, April, and Ann desired more understanding/support from their counseling professors. In Ann's case, she wished professors had a better knowledge of her religious background and how it impacted her multicultural development. April said she wished she had people from non-Christian religions present their religious culture in class to build more spiritual competency across different religious groups. Jane expressed a similar concern and said she did not always feel like she could receive the support she needed from some of her professors and peers as she waded through her shifting theological views and Christian identity, especially in the classroom setting. In the following statement, she discusses how spirituality should be a competency that is learned just like other forms of clinical competency:

> I think that similarly in that there's all types of topics that … go into your master's program in counseling, and I don't necessarily feel comfortable at that time talking with somebody about, like, trauma and their trauma narratives or about the depths of their depression, or let alone talking to somebody who's suicidal, you know, like you have all these different kinds of competency. These things that we learn to be comfortable with, at least on a level, comfortable with and competent in addressing, and I feel like spirituality is such a big one in people's lives. I wish not that people would necessarily have to get the theological training about what people believe about God, but just that they would have to be exposed to [spiritual concerns]. You might have somebody come in and want to talk to you about their beliefs about God, and I don't know how comfortable people would be about that. And I think that somewhere along the line, we learn to be comfortable with all these other topics. Spirituality needs to be one of those as well.

Elizabeth, Jessica, and Jane also discussed a lack of support and understanding from classmates. Jane said, "I don't think that my average classmate cared enough about spiritual

things in their own life to understand why it would matter so much to me." Elizabeth and Jessica's frustration mainly came from feeling like their peers did not understand multicultural dynamics related to race, gender, and sexual orientation. In all their examples, these classmates either identified as evangelical or were enacting multicultural dynamics reflective of evangelical culture. Jessica made this statement about a White classmate failing to understand their racial identity and its connection to privilege:

> There was a student in my diversity class. And, you know, on day one, I said, "This is ridiculous. We have a White professor and nothing but White people in this class like this is a mockery of diversity." And I have to name that. But we had a student who is from South Africa but is White. And when we were doing the race aspect, [this student said] "I'm African American" and … this person was actually arguing against white privilege. They're like, "I am oppressed. I am an African American." Literally, everybody looked at me like cats watching tennis because they knew this was not going to go over well. ... That is not the same … like just visible privilege. If you are a person from another country at a private institution, you are not African American. I cannot tell you what you are, but you are not African American in the sense that Trayvon Martin was African American. And it was just very tense, and I think we actually ended early that night and I was—you know this classmate and I had had some interaction before, and I was always the one to push back. … But I ultimately told them, "Well, I'm not going to apologize for what I said, and I would not be this disappointed in you if I didn't think you could do otherwise." So what do you do? Like if I really didn't think you were capable of reflection, I would not be so angry that you refused to do it.

Perception/Authenticity Management

Apart from Ann, all the participants discussed the struggle to have authentic conversations and/or manage people's perceptions of themselves, especially as it related to their faith identity as a post-evangelical Christian counselor. For some, perception management meant keeping appearances at the expense of authenticity, and for others, managing their perception was more of a way of maneuvering through false assumptions people had about their Christian identity. Additionally, some participants were not managing perceptions so much as they were managing levels of authenticity because of the adverse implications self-disclosure could have on their relationships. In this way, this theme holds both perception and authenticity management as overlapping and distinctive choices depending on the participant and their context.

Between Family

David, Jessica, and April all discussed the tension they felt with their family in managing the value conflicts with their close relatives and parents. This management was a strategy to mitigate the cost authenticity could have on their familial relationships. Potential value conflicts included their theological and political views and their work as counselors. While they never discussed betraying themselves by audibly agreeing to their family's values that were contrary to their internal position, they all had ways of mitigating perceived threats to their relationship with relatives by not sharing all their perspectives.

The decision to omit or not reveal their whole position on potentially explosive topics such as their thoughts on sexual identity, conversionism, counseling techniques, gender, and/or race was sometimes a tactic to keep the peace between their family members. This omission strategy was either initiated by either the participant, their relatives, or tacitly agreed upon by all parties. David summarized this perception management by acting out the following omission strategy with his family:

> There's tension there, for sure. But I never really got past not being able to talk about it. So how I said my master's program—I had different beliefs but didn't feel like I could safely talk about that with them. I still don't feel that way. I still—like, I meet in conversations about religion, and… I'm silent. I just don't. I kind of nod my head and it's more of a peacekeeping strategy. To actually say "I believe differently" would cause lots of turmoil. My parents would feel like they were failures as parents that, like, "Oh my gosh, like, I didn't do my job right because he believes differently now." There's just a lot of stuff there. So while I'm not attending an evangelical church now, when I go back home, sometimes, like, that stuff is still there.

However, there are moments of a perceived implied agreement of omission between family members. David said his family members may know that he has deviated from their evangelical views, but he says they do not inquire, saying, "They don't ask. I don't think they want to know the answer." Another participant, Jessica, said her parents initiated the omission strategy:

> But there are certain things we don't talk about. … I was thinking the other day, I was like, you know, we've never as a family had a conversation about trans people and that's, like, half of my work. I think that there are decisions of omission on the part of my parents that are telling.

Between Peers, Professors, and Clients

In other cases, participants discussed perception/authenticity management between their peers, colleagues, and clients. For these participants, carrying a Christian identity or working at a Christian counseling organization meant clients, colleagues, and peers held positive or negative assumptions on them. Therefore, these participants had to choose what to reveal about themselves and weigh the consequences of that disclosure.

April, David, and Jessica all described how they managed false assumptions clients may or may not have of them due to their Christian identity. David said his transgender clients were initially nervous about seeking mental health support at the evangelical-affiliated practice he worked at, but many came anyway due to the lack of mental health services in that area. David said he “disarmed” their initial distrust after they got to know him. Similarly, Jessica knew that her previous “reverend” title came with certain connotations, and she said she would broach that identity with her clients by dispelling any assumptions attached to her past clergy status. For April, she had to manage the perception clients had of her because she would often have evangelical clients hear she was a Christian, and consequently, they assumed she shared many of their beliefs about gender and sexual identity. The following paragraphs are a series of April’s statements surrounding this phenomenon:

> It's so odd to me. I will still get referred. I work with a lot of teens and college-age [individuals]. That's my specialty. I will get a lot of teens coming from families who are more on the evangelical side. And somehow think I'm going to convince their kid not to be homosexual. But I'm safe because they have figured out—like somebody has told them that I identify as Christian or because I identify as Christian, I'm, like, a safe person to take their kids to counseling.
>
> I felt like a fraud. I struggled with is this. Is this ethical to let them assume this about me and be more comfortable with me because of these assumptions when it's wrong? Or is it ethical to tell them, but I can't even explain my views? To myself, like, I'm not sure I can explain them to somebody else right now. I felt bad about it. I really did. I felt bad that they were assuming I was one thing and I wasn't.

When asked why she felt like a fraud she responded:

> I think it's because of the viewpoint of mental health and evangelicalism and the fact that that's part of the reason they might seek me out. Like, they're not seeking me out

> because I'm married or because I'm White or because they think I'm middle class. They're seeking me out because they've heard or been given the impression somehow that I'm a Christian and then the assumptions that go with that. I think that is why that one was harder for me.
>
> There was a resolution, and I think the resolution came through supervision and going back to, like, do no harm. And anything you disclose in session should be a benefit to the client and the client's goals. And going back to that, I—there could be other clients that assume lots of things about me that have nothing to do with religion.
>
> I mean, I don't play along. I don't play into it or go along with it. But I don't feel guilty about having my own belief system, and if they come in and assume something about me—which brings up an interesting question. So one of the tattoos I have on my arm is a cross, and I've thought about covering it. Because I think that also plays into the assumption, and it's also not something I necessarily identify with much anymore.

Other participants managed perceptions and or levels of authenticity to gain clinical experience or mitigate perceived reputational risks between classmates. The following statement highlights David's perception management to gain clinical experience at an evangelical-affiliated practice:

> You have to sign a faith values statement that says, "I believe," and there was, like, 10 or 12 bullet points on the list, then you have to sign it. And it was like the "I believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven, and that it is our duty as followers of Christ to love our world and love our community as well and to lead people to Jesus" and all these kinds of things. And it was part of your new hire paperwork, just thrown in there with your tax forms and stuff. It was really kind of silly, but yeah, that's kind of one of those things—and signing the value statement. And then in staff meetings, everybody would pray together and talk about all the amazing work that the Lord is doing and all their clients' lives and things like that. And I just again kind of nod my head. And yeah, it was playing the game.

Jane managed her perception and self-disclosure as a strategy for maintaining a safe reputation with her peers. Jane said she felt uncomfortable asking questions regarding faith development, especially moving from an evangelical to Catholic identity, and mostly chose not to ask her questions in a classroom setting because she feared classmates may see her faith and counselor identity as contradictory. She summarized this sentiment this way:

> It [my faith questions/struggles] didn't feel as welcomed, especially not in the same way as those who shared about being hurt by organized religion. … I think there's also the sense in which the counseling profession and some tenets of Christianity are, by the broader culture, seen as contradictory. Like that Christians aren't really accepting of

> other people. And, I don't know, I didn't obviously want my classmates to think I was going to be a bad counselor.

Grief

Except for Jane, all the participants carried or carry grief as they reflected on their evangelical upbringing and its impact on them as counselors. Out of the five participants who discussed themes of grief, all but one discussed grief within the parent-child relationship. Two participants also regretted some of the evangelical beliefs they imposed on others, thereby disrupting the wellbeing of those adversely impacted by evangelical culture.

For April, she said she experienced anger with her parents as she tried to widen their perspectives on gender, sexual identity, and scriptural interpretation. She said she had to learn to accept that they may not change their beliefs, and then she had to navigate what impact this had on their roles within her life. In the following statement, she discusses these themes and her struggle to understand evangelicalism's impact on her father's abusive patterns:

> I think there's a lot of anger towards my parents initially. It's almost—it was almost like a grief cycle with my parents. There was a lot of anger initially, and then I fought with them a lot and I shared resources and was battling their ideas and then kind of got to this point where ... it doesn't matter what I send them. They are blatantly just going to believe what they're going to believe. And so I kind of had to come to this acceptance. And then what kind of roles do I want them [to have] in my life? But I think part of that was also my dad was very abusive, and so I think religion helped him to be abusive, but I think even without the religion, he would have been abusive. And so I think part of that grief process was also mixed in with that, like, they were interlaced. So I can't say this is all just straight, you know, my religious spiritual journey, because there was also a healing part of childhood trauma mixed in with it. But. It was—yeah, it was definitely, like, this grief process.

For David, the grief was retrospective as he gained a greater awareness of evangelical culture's impact on his beliefs. In this way, it was only until he understood the deleterious nature of evangelical culture that the grief began to surface. He said, "I never really identified as somebody that had been through abuse growing up. And I was like wait, this was, I mean, harmful. … I'm still trying to recover from a lot of that stuff—like purity culture and things like that." He used the following metaphor to describe what this grief feels like:

> So [it's] like a big inflatable ball inside of a box, and there's a button inside the box, and when you—when the ball pushes up against the button, that's your pain. That's the grief response. I'm feeling this. I'm feeling pain because of that. And over time, that ball deflates and as it's bouncing around in the box, it hits the button less often, but it still [hits] it every now and again, even as it gets smaller. So that's kind of what that is for me. That is—that's my button, and my ball is deflated a bit over time, but it's still there and it really comes back specifically when we go back home to visit.

In addition to this type of retrospective grief, David made the following statement about ways he unintentionally marginalized people in the name of "love":

> And so just the realization that I, like—wow—I really contributed to this. And I recall times and conversations I'd been in that. Then I'm like, "Oh my gosh, that was just a cruel thing for me to say." And I, like, really believed at the time I was being loving, you know, so just having to wrestle with that was very challenging. And also, I had this client one time, and I'll never forget what they said. They said, "Never have I experienced a hate like a believer's love." That was powerful.

Ann's grief was also retrospective as she considered how her parents' evangelical beliefs were unhelpful for her multicultural development and the implicit messages she received about her own worth, especially as someone who experienced sexual abuse within the church. In the following statement, she describes a period of disorientation, anger, and acceptance over her parents:

> I would say disorienting. I mean, because it's what I knew all my life and then—and both my parents are deceased, and they were before I started grad school. And so for me, at first, I was kind of angry. So I wanted to blame them. But then I thought to myself, "How can I blame them for what they were taught?" You know what I mean? They were taught just like I was. So I had to come to the conclusion I couldn't blame them.

Although Jessica left evangelicalism long before her master's program in counseling, she still experiences hurt and reminders of her upbringing when she encounters a situation, particularly when she or someone from a marginalized community is minimized. She made the following statement to describe this grief experience and activation:

> It is so much the water that I still swim in, even though I am no longer part of it. But, you know, it is infused in this culture. And particularly right now, I think this is one of the most evangelical moments that I've ever seen in my life with this ironically very un-Christian former president. And sometimes I'll [experience] something, and I'll unflinchingly respond, and it hurts, right, but I've forgotten, and that's part of myself until something happens, and I'm aware of it.

Evangelical Juxtaposition

Three participants, Jane, Ann, and Elizabeth, expressed varying levels of evangelical juxtaposition. They experienced and described this evangelical juxtaposition in several ways. Jane described a juxtaposition between her close evangelical friends she admires and the evangelical community as a whole, which is unappealing to her. She described holding that tension together by recognizing her friends' individuality:

> I would describe them [evangelicals] as my friends, like my friends from college. Some of them are, like, my closest and dearest friends. And, by in large, are people who really care about others. Who their faith matters to them. Yeah, I would say that by in large, I think of them as good people. But whenever I think of, like, evangelicals as an umbrella, I don't necessarily have those same thoughts.
>
> So on the one hand, I think one of my best friends. … I think they go to a nondenominational church. She's a social worker. We talk clinical stuff pretty regularly. Just a helpful person to bounce things off of as well as we talk about faith stuff pretty often. So I think about her. And then I think about, like, if somebody were to help me just think of a stereotypical evangelical. It's just like. Yikes. You know, uber-conservative, thinks other people are wrong. Yeah, just not very gracious, I guess. So thinking about the two different—like my friend and this, like a fake person—I think that it can be hard to reconcile that, like, in a certain sense. They're the same, but I don't know. I think that I tend to view people as much more individual, so I think that it doesn't end up being too difficult to reconcile.

Similarly, Ann described evangelicals as "loving God's people the way they are, where they're at." Upon further inquiry, Ann discussed how she felt "damned" and judged by her evangelical community. She also talked about how many counseling values regarding nonjudgment and multicultural competencies were not well aligned with evangelicalism. When asked about this juxtaposition between her definition and her experience, she replied, "It was confusing for me feeling like I wasn't good enough, but then sometimes they would make you feel like you were good enough."

Elizabeth described a juxtaposition between her early encounters with evangelicalism and getting to know her boss and other evangelicals she admired. Over time, as she began to know evangelicalism better through her counseling program at the Protestant school she attended, she began to not identify as an evangelical.

> So my relationship with evangelicalism was more—actually, I first identified with it at my work, I worked in foster care and adoption and I was a recruiter. And so I would go to different churches to recruit foster parents and adoptive parents. And that's when I first came into contact with evangelicalism and my boss was a Pentecostal minister. And for me, I could get on board with a lot of things. I admired their faith and dedication. But there was a lot of things I didn't agree with.

Elizabeth also said she found evangelicals were "encouraging" in her faith development, yet, when asked how they were encouraging, given her contrasting faith trajectory, she said, "Nobody wants to say they're not encouraging somebody else on their spiritual journey." She clarified that they were outwardly encouraging but only because she had learned to not share specifics about how her faith was evolving.

Educational Experiences

The participants described various moments of faith disorientation and reorientation cultivated through a specific educational experience. The themes presented were: exposure to diversity, bias checking, mentor support, supplemental learning, and institutional-CACREP misalignment. This superordinate theme of educational experiences describes specific developmental moments contextualized in an academic setting. Sometimes the academic setting expanded beyond counselor education, but all the themes related to formal educational moments in some way.

Exposure to Diversity

Three participants described exposure to diversity as a critical factor in their faith and multicultural development. Exposure to diversity could include developing relationships with classmates or working with clients from different backgrounds, religious groups, and other salient identities. Additionally, exposure to diversity included being exposed to different ideas, spiritual practices, and cultures.

David described being exposed to ideas during his counseling program that were different from his evangelical background. He discussed developing a relationship with a gay couple who had a "godly relationship" and meeting friends from different religions who would

pray together with him. In the following statements, he talks about noticing some incongruencies between his faith background and what he learned in graduate school:

> I would say it was like a pretty left-leaning Christian program. And so, like, at that point is when things kind of started. There is some incongruence between what I had learned was right growing up and even what they were teaching there and how that impacted my clinical practice in working with folks and hearing lots of stories and experiences. That was kind of counter to the narrative that I had been taught growing up.

As David began to develop as a counselor, he noticed his relationship with gay people change while he was in his internship, saying:

> I worked with—I'd say that the best therapeutic relationships I had, in my internship and even afterwards, were with people who had, like, almost nothing in common with me. So these were people that had either, like, different faith, beliefs of different cultures, you know, folks of LGBTQ communities and things like that. I remember distinctly; I had a lesbian couple coming to see me because they wanted to improve their relationship and work on communication and improve sex life and things like that. ... I mean, it was great, and I love getting to work with them and saw some really good improvements. But I was also, you know, recalling this time I was sitting with them and I'm like, “Man, even just like a few years ago, I felt this was so wrong, and I just don't feel that way anymore.” They're just people. So that was kind of the start of my deconstruction journey is working with people that I had been taught growing up were, like, living in sin and things like that, and I just like didn't believe that anymore.

Jane mentioned she strategically chose her Catholic university because she hoped it would expose her to different people while still being at an institution that valued faith. She described this decision process this way:

> Whenever I was looking at programs, I was definitely more interested in something that would at least be open to faith discussions and integration discussions. So I ended up going to the [name of the university] … which is a Catholic school. I kind of picked it because being a Catholic institution, they weren't going to, like, trash Christianity and faith discussions, but they're not very staunchly Catholic. And I just really wanted a lot of different exposure and different types of people that I would talk to within my program. So I had Muslim classmates, LGBTQ classmates, Wiccan classmates, as well as various types of Christians. So I knew that I was itching to get out of the evangelical bubble and have broader discussions on what faith meant. So I think my faith definitely directed me in kind of how I wanted to pick where I wanted to be and who I wanted to be around me.

April discussed being exposed to other spiritual practices, which helped her along her faith development. She described this exposure this way:

> When I went to the graduate certificate program for Expressive Arts, we did a lot of spiritual things there. We went to a Unitarian church and spent three days in silence with each other. And we did drum circles, and we did different spiritual things, exploring it

> together. And I think that's where I came to this peace of, “It's okay for me to believe that there is a God and not necessarily take any of the rest with me.”

Bias Checking

Four participants discussed their own biases or classmates’ biases in their counseling development. Each participant was in a different place in their multicultural development. Some participants were completely supportive of sex between same-sex couples. Another participant affirmed that people are “born gay” and could affirm qualities of same-sex relationships but did not explicitly support the physical act of sex in a gay relationship. Additionally, one participant was supportive of abortion and another participant did not personally support it but recognized abortion as a personal choice, which is left up to the client.

Two participants, who had shed their evangelical identity either well before their counseling program or almost immediately after starting their program, had different responses about biases. These two participants mostly discussed how other classmates with evangelical beliefs displayed racial, gender, or sexual biases. One participant said they had to work through biases toward “anti-choice people” and “women who are married to conservative men, and who are really subservient.” This participant said, “I still do not work with cis, hetero White men. … They don't—they don't fit into many of my categories,” and “I have no desire to work with—to be one-on-one in a room with heterosexual White men, and I don't think I'm the therapist for them.” The other participant said they did not have the biases she witnessed in many of her classmates—mainly heterosexism, sexism, and racism.

In the following quote, David describes a moment of bias checking during a class activity that asked students to decide whether sexual orientation is an immutable trait or one that is cultivated through environmental factors:

> Maybe it was, like, my human growth and development … class. … We did this exercise where it was the nature versus nurture debate, right? And so the room was long. And so they said, you know, “Over here is nature, over here is nurture, and the middle is, ‘I don't really know. Or maybe it's both.’ So stand, like, on, like, where you stand on the spectrum, like physically in the room.”… I stood kind of in the middle—between the middle and nurture. So leaning more towards nurture and … a lot of other people were,

> like, smacked against the wall on one side or the other. And I was just like, wow, I'm, like, kind of one of the few people that are here in the middle. And so that, like, really challenged me of, like, wow, is—you know, the things that I've been taught growing up, are they actually what I believe? And then, like, why are these other people are, like, all the way nature [or] all the way nurture. I should, like—we should have a conversation about that. And so that's one that stands out to me that really kind of started to challenge the ways that I had thought about things.

Jane describes her process of checking her biases through her relationships with trusted classmates, particularly those from the LGBTQ community. In describing these classmates, she said, “It's a small group of particular people that I would have that type of blunt, open, honest discussion.” Jane would say to her small group of classmates, “Hey, I grew up evangelical, not affirming of the LGBTQ community. As a member of that community, you know, like being able to kind of talk through, like, this is my gut response to somebody talking about their anxiety to coming out to their family. Can you help me fine-tune this to be better?” In the following statement, she talks specifically about how her relationship with a transgender classmate helped her check her biases around gender identity concerns:

> I think I asked a lot of faith questions. You know, talking with a classmate who is going through a … gender transition … being able to talk with them about their perceptions of Christianity. Like what is it like for you to talk to me thinking, “Oh, you're a Christian and you want to be a counselor? Like, you're probably really biased” and just being able to listen to kind of how I would be perceived in a really safe space. So just being able to hear that and be able to discuss with them, “Hey, this is kind of how I view these things. If I had a client and they had this situation and I responded this way, can you check me on that?” I think it really helped me to check my biases and have that question going on in my mind of, “Am I responding to the best interest of my client? Or do I have some particular bias in the back of my mind?

Mentor Support

Mentor support was a significant piece of two participants’ faith development while enrolled in their counseling programs. In all cases, students benefited from one-on-one conversations with professors or supervisors to help them navigate questions or spiritual dilemmas. Additionally, all these mentors were Christians who offered a place for participants to share their faith and multicultural questions and concerns in a nonjudgmental space.

In the following quote, David describes how helpful his internship supervisor was in processing through his faith and counseling concerns:

> But in my program and during my internship … he had a sticker on his door that was trans-affirming, gay-affirming, all that kind of stuff, which was like really stirring the pot in that community. That was quite a big scandal. You know, his belief, he was like, "If I'm loving my clients well, I want them to know that they can be seen here, and that I accept them and value them as they are. And that being, like, actual godly love is doing just that—is loving well." And so a lot of my conversations with him in our supervisory relationship really helped with my faith development. And just like in my change, kind of moving away from my evangelical identity, a lot of that, like, happened because [of] my relationship with my clinical supervisor. There was a—it was a good kind of safe space to kind of talk about a lot of these issues because he was not very evangelical himself.

Jane expressed a similar sentiment, only her supportive mentors were her professors:

> I had a couple of professors who were Christian or Catholic that I felt like were super helpful, and I think it just kind of made us closer. I felt more open to be able to talk with them having various questions about integration. I never took, like, a class on faith integration or spirituality in counseling. So kind of just taking up office hours to do that because it is something I was really interested in. So I think that I got—if it weren't for that and I wasn't seeking that out, I don't know if I would have had some of the conversations or even, like, really taken up that time to talk with my professors as much.

Supplemental Learning

Two participants, Jane and David, supplemented their faith development through attending theology classes outside CACREP academic standards while enrolled in their counseling program. Elizabeth and Jessica also pursued supplemental learning through a master's of divinity. However, for these two participants, their enrollment in their divinity program did not overlap with their time as counseling students. Additionally, April discussed reading resources on how the Bible was translated to better understand the multiple ways translations can deviate from the original meaning of ancient biblical texts. April engaged with this supplemental material after she graduated from her counseling program.

Except for David, all the other participants engaged in supplemental learning on their own volition. David's program was unique in that supplemental learning was built into the program. David described the impact of supplemental learning this way:

> And even though I was [in] a Christian place like, right, there's still CACREP. We still have these standards you have to meet to be affiliated with them. And so they were

> meeting that. But also there were, like, biblical studies classes that we would take as a part of the program. It wasn't like a CACREP requirement, of course, but they just wanted us to do that. And so I just learned to read scripture in a different way. And, like, how things are open to interpretation. And, you know, like why is it that we have so many denominations? Well, that's because people read this thing differently and that's okay. So let's have a discussion about how we're reading it.

Institutional-CACREP Misalignment

Only one person mentioned institutional-CACREP misalignment. Elizabeth attended a Protestant, reformed Presbyterian university, a denomination that does not affirm gay people or ordain women. The institution's counseling program is CACREP accredited, and she responded with the following statements when asked about the misalignment between CACREP's standard of honoring all people's salient identities and the university itself acting as a barrier for women and LGBTQ people:

> So just because the college denomination is extremely conservative, I don't think that's a reflection on the individual views of the professors, and because the counseling department is CACREP certified, and the professors are CACREP professors—they all have their PhDs in counselor education and supervision—then they understand wholly what the code of ethics means. ... One of them went to [name of university], which is an evangelical university, [and] found a way to balance those things.
>
> I engaged with a Christian therapist who was licensed as a counselor. When I filed for divorce, she dumped me as a therapist after I'd been with her for three years. … Was I going to report her to the Board of Ethics? No. Wasn't worth the hassle. But I think there's always a disconnect between the ideal of what we want and what really happens. And I think most professors at [name of her university] understand the love and the care that they're required to give—or that they're mandated or called to give students, as undergrads—is sometimes in direct conflict with the sort of legalism that often comes with conservative Christianity.

Reconstruction

Each participant described a process of reconstructing their theological assumptions, identity, spiritual ideas and rituals, and ethical counseling practices during their respective counseling programs. These moments of reconstruction helped move the participants forward in their multicultural and faith development. April used "puzzles" as a metaphor for this developmental process. She said, "I already had the puzzle pieces. This [graduate school] was like the map of how they go together."

Identity Clarification

All the participants had moments of identity clarification as part of their reconstruction process while in their counseling program. This identity clarification process took various forms for the participants, and for some, there was more than one identity being clarified. However, for all the participants, their evangelical background influenced how they understood their faith, personal, and counselor identities.

Counselors Who Happen to be Christian

For Ann, David, Elizabeth, and April, the awareness and deconstruction of evangelical culture led them to shed their evangelical identity and shaped how their faith and counseling identities coexisted. For these participants, they began to understand a clear distinction between identifying as a Christian counselor and a counselor who happens to be Christian. All of them chose the latter and understood Christian counseling to be akin to evangelical biblical counseling. While Jane and Jessica did not discuss this understanding of their counseling identity specifically, their description of their counseling disposition reflects a similar understanding of how their faith intersects with their counseling identity. Elizabeth expressed this sentiment as she discussed why she does not identify as an evangelical or a Christian counselor:

> I think there's too many connotations that go with it that imply things that I don't want it to. Likewise, whenever I first started my counseling program, I wanted to be a Christian counselor, and that took me half a second to realize that I wanted to be a counselor who was grounded in my Christianity … because there's a whole set of assumptions that go with that [Christian counselor] label.
>
> I would say that probably my evangelical background is what got me, or my belief system was got—was what got me to [name of university] in the first place. And then once I was there, it was actually sort of the more, you know, the more you understand. So it was very quickly that I realized … being a Christian, identifying myself as a Christian counselor would have people coming into my counseling sessions with a preordained set of standards that they expected a Christian to believe x y z. And that's not how I wanted to conduct my counseling. And I didn't want my Christian faith to be used to promote misogyny or discrimination or bias against the LGBT community or any

> of those things. And I could see particularly evangelicals attempting to manipulate that in the context of therapy.

Personal Identity

For Jane, although her identity changed from evangelical to Catholic, she “felt very much the same” and said, “I don’t feel like I’m a different person.” However, to her evangelical community, they believed she had become “somebody else entirely.” David described a similar sentiment in that the core of his self was not changing, but the process of shedding his evangelical identity and leaning into his counseling identity had a refining quality to it. He described this identity refinement this way:

> It was hard, but I think it was enriching, and I think it made me a better therapist and a better friend, quite frankly. But I mean, it's kind of like how you make a sculpture, as—you know, chip off parts of yourself. And so what's left is, is what should be. So I think I was kind of the beginning of my sculpting process, so to speak.

Ann, Jessica, and Elizabeth had moments of identity clarification that was a process of reclaiming their worth. All these participants had experienced abuse from other evangelical men and were explicitly or implicitly minimized, silenced, or degraded in some way. Other participants discussed their abusive pasts, but they did not connect these experiences to identity clarification like Ann, Jessica, and Elizabeth. For these three participants, their counseling program helped them reclaim a feeling of worth, value, and power. Jessica said this reclaiming of her value was also connected to her ability to be vulnerable. For her, vulnerability was not necessarily associated with showing weakness, but instead, it meant owning her strength. She summarized her vulnerability and strength this way:

> I think that vulnerability about my own worth—because evangelicalism minimized it—I think I've had to push against that in order to even show up as a therapist because if I believed what evangelicalism told me about myself, I would not think that I was able to do this. Because it tells you that you're sinful, that you’re bad nature. And it definitely tells me that as a woman, my job is to have children and take care of them and not know anything for sure.

Do No Harm

The counselor ethic of “do no harm” was an anchor or orientation that helped reconstruct four participants’ theology and practice as counselors. For Jane, Ann, David, and Jessica, “do no harm” meant they had to leave evangelical theology personally and professionally because embodying those theological assumptions would compromise this ethical standard. All these participants stressed how important it was to not impose religious beliefs on others and to understand that the client is the expert of their own life.

From Jane’s perspective, while she did not see a way for her to embody evangelical theology without harming others, she left room for the possibility that this dichotomy may not be true for other evangelicals who are aware of their impact on others. However, she said she had to take steps away from evangelicalism to cultivate more cultural awareness for herself and others. In the following quote, Jane perceives that many evangelicals saw people as “projects” and held an imposing view about how they should change—often focused on changing a client’s religious beliefs:

> I think that there are ways to be evangelical and not necessarily embody it. I think that if you're not aware … that's particularly harmful, then you just by nature, start seeing people that way, [as projects]. And I don't think that could have been for me personally; I don't think I could have been aware if I wasn't stepping, taking a step back from it. So again, maybe somebody else could see it, see it and still be in it, but for me, I don't know how possible that was.

David iterated a similar disposition about treating people as projects with the goal of saving them from eternal damnation. He said finding a new theological paradigm that does no harm, especially in his counseling practice, was critical to his counseling and faith development. David described this process of faith and counselor development and do no harm this way:

> I've done some damage, and that was probably the most difficult thing for me, especially as a counselor. And we were all about alleviating suffering and for people, you know, coming to us as they are and, you know, that being okay. And we don't like to do harm. That's why we have counselors.
>
> If your theology hurts people, you need a new theology because that's not the message of Jesus. ... [That’s] not what is being taught I think in some places and definitely not in

> evangelical communities. And this isn't to hate, like, on every evangelical that's ever lived. I think there are some evangelical communities that are still doing really good work and good things. And I don't—I just don't subscribe to a lot of those beliefs anymore.

For Jessica, she talked about the toxicity and harm associated with controlling client outcomes and tied this quality of control to evangelicalism. She said she learned in her counseling program to work alongside clients rather than act upon them. She described her orientation toward clients this way:

> So I think that in ministry and then in therapy, you know, it's toxic to want to do for; it's toxic to want to do to. It only works if you're doing with, and doing with requires that both of you are known to the other. And I'm not somebody that necessarily loves being vulnerable. But in time, it's come. It's a thing I hold most dear is that vulnerability and back and forth with my clients. A lot of them have been badly hurt by the church. You know, there is religious trauma by their families of origin when they have come out, and they've been completely dead-named or worse—or cut off or ridiculed. And you know, what an honor that they want to open up to somebody, so how could I not give that back? I'm not a blank slate, for sure, because that doesn't feel fair. In the power, especially with those clients ... I'm more self-revealing than others, and that's fine. But yeah, I think that—that notion that you're not acting upon something, you know?

Spiritual Expansiveness

Three participants used this idea of spiritual expansiveness as another tool to reconstruct their faith while moving through their graduate program. This theme had several different applications, but it encompasses a sense of openness to spiritual ideas and experiences that may not traditionally be thought of as spiritual in evangelical contexts. In this way, spiritual expansiveness opened more possibilities for my participants to connect with spirituality in ways that were perhaps overlooked in their evangelical spaces. Additionally, for these participants, spiritual expansiveness cultivated a deeper sense of curiosity and comfort with ambiguity in ways that were not encouraged previously.

For Jessica and Ann, they connected their spirituality to the flow of therapy and its often-nebulous path of healing. Ann mentioned her “philosophy has been that I don't have to preach about Jesus or tell someone.” She “shows it… through how I treat people.” In this way, showing someone love in session is much more spiritually connecting and healing than explicitly

referencing God or Christianity. Jessica had a similar statement on the spiritual process of counseling. She said in her evangelical background, immediate healing and "day of" conversion moments were celebrated as spiritually powerful moments. In the following quote, Jessica talks about how unrealistic this immediate "turnaround" story is in therapy and reframed the slow, arduous, and ambiguous nature of therapy as a sacred process worthy of honor:

> There are any number of formulas that can lead to this outcome, and here are some moments that I've seen. I think that was different and that was informed by my faith, and I really had to struggle with pushing down the way that evangelicals … love a turnaround story. … But I think that a lot of people have that presupposition about therapy. And that's not the goal. And so I think that was the piece of my faith that was left that I didn't realize was there. … There is no conversion like people think there is. It's long and slow and visible and unnoticeable, and arduous. …They both are holy, and I would say the second is even holier. From the first, the first is just weird, it's just kismet. But the second is like human and present with somebody and messy.

Jessica also used spiritual expansiveness to reconstruct what she thought about God. In this case, God might be better defined by what God is not, and it may be better to hold definitions about God with an open hand and cultural humility. She said God is "not something I can articulate" but something she "infrequently but delightfully experience[s]." She said, "It's not a set of definitions; it's a sensation that there is something present. … The structure to the chaos." In this way, Jessica said she has "become less rigid in what other people believe" about God. She metaphorically described this process as two people looking at a painting and interpreting it very differently.

David and April described expanding their sense of spirituality through either different spiritual rituals or relationships with people from other religions. April described expanding her sense of spirituality through "drum circles" and "spending time in nature or doing art or finding connection and group activities." She said "being able to experience other spiritual practices and feel fulfilled" gave her a more experiential connection to God in a way that existed outside of Bible reading. In a similar way, David described his relationships with a Jewish and a Muslim friend, and they would "pray together, and it's like we're praying to the same God."

Morality

Four of my participants discussed redefining boundaries around morality as a reconstruction process for their faith and multicultural development. For Jessica, Elizabeth, and David, evangelical culture had a way of categorically defining behaviors, ideas, and people in moral terms. To varying degrees, each of these participants learned to unravel the moral binding around people, actions, and ideas. This is not to say that all things became amoral for them, but there was a process in which they decided to take inventory over what should or should not exist in moral terms. Jessica summarized this kind of moral categorization this way:

> But I see that that comes from this constant good and bad binary that is part of evangelicalism, like we have to know who is good, who we think is in God's favor, who we think is a sheep, not a goat. And so that constantly wanting to label things in a very binary and black and white way, I think would come instinctually, even when I knew better.

In the following quote, Elizabeth had a similar perspective and discussed how she did not want evangelical culture and its extension of morality to impact her work as a therapist:

> I didn't want to see it happen in my therapy sessions. When you begin to make all decisions, moral decisions—if you don't agree with me, then you're morally incompetent or morally corrupt or morally less. So all decisions … [for example] you're setting boundaries; you're not showing God's love.

For David and Ann, they discussed how they learned that many different beliefs do not have to be right or wrong, but instead, they are another perspective to consider. For David, he mentioned these different perspectives in the context of evaluating different ways of interpreting the Bible. However, Ann talked about different perspectives in the context of multicultural variables, specifically race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality (although the last two were not mentioned in the context of the following quote, they were discussed in the interview). She expressed this sentiment this way:

> That was another thing that was kind of eye-opening because you get taught one thing in one way, but then when you're learning in counseling. It all comes down to the nonjudgment … and then multiculturalism, whether it's race, whether it's ethnicity. Learning to work with people is—it's been amazing for me. But I had to shed some things. Some ideas of what I thought was good or not, good. It's all about perspective.

> … It doesn't mean they're right, it doesn't mean I'm wrong for their role. It's a perspective.

Imago Dei

Five participants, Elizabeth, Jessica, David, Jane, and Ann, used the theological position surrounding God's creation of humankind in God's image (Imago Dei) as a lens for understanding the inherent worth of themselves and others. While evangelicals also affirm this theological position, these participants used this position to draw implications that served to include more people who traditionally are on the fringes of evangelical and church culture.

For David, this understanding sparked a starting place for gay-affirming beliefs. He concluded, "If we are all made in God's image, if we believe that's true and we also know that, like, some people are just born gay… They're still made in his image, right?"

For Jane, Ann, Elizabeth, and Jessica, they used Imago Dei to see people as more than their behaviors and identification as Christian or non-Christian. To them, Imago Dei meant drawing a bigger circle, including more people, and seeing clients from a holistic perspective. For two participants, this also had eternal implications, meaning people who may not be confessing Christians could be included in heaven. Jessica said being created in the image of God meant she sees the "potential" people have and her belief that "we are constantly evolving and becoming who we could be." Jane said Imago Dei means "people are unique and unrepeatable." She said she started "seeing each person as more than just the sum of their particular issues," and "they have inherent value [and are created] for a good purpose." In the following statement, Elizabeth summarizes what Imago Dei means for her work with incarcerated men:

> As I delved into that Christian identity more, and I was able to first introduce the concept of Imago Dei, the image of God. It was something that struck me, and it's something that sticks with me to this day. And to know that no matter what, no matter what, you could be anything. You're a human being and you're a child of God. You're—you were created in God's image, no matter how you identify yourself. God still claims you as his, and therefore, he calls me to help you.

Chapter V: Discussion

This research sought to answer the following question: How do White post-evangelical Christian counselors experience faith disorientation and/or resolution while enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counseling program? The emerging themes revealed faith disorientation and resolution is a complex process for White post-evangelical Christian counseling students involving grief, religious trauma, multicultural development, identity formation, theological paradigm retooling, and risky social/reputational dynamics. These themes and dynamics are woven through the following discussion and implications in greater detail. Additionally, the experiences of faith disorientation and resolution had many overlapping and divergent themes across the participants, which can be partially understood by examining the differing faith stages of each participant while in their counseling program.

As stated in chapters I and II, Fowler's faith development theory provides the theoretical framework for understanding the faith development process and surrounding participant experiences (see Table 4). Fowler's faith developmental theory is coupled with multicultural development, meaning faith development cannot occur without multicultural development. The participants exhibited characteristics of stage four as they reflected on their counseling experience. In doing so, they demonstrated a recognition of their evangelical upbringing and its influence on their understanding of faith and multiculturalism. Upon that recognition, they began to deconstruct and develop new faith paradigms in tandem with their multicultural development. However, not all the participants entered their programs at the same faith stage. Those who had left their evangelical identity prior to entering their counseling program were further along in their faith stages and demonstrated stronger stage four faith characteristics, while those who had not yet left their evangelical identity upon program admission were either in stage three or between stage three and four upon entering their counseling program. This suggests, for these participants, leaving evangelicalism is necessary for faith and multicultural development. Furthermore, for these participants, leaving evangelicalism entailed not identifying as

evangelical. However, a discussion surrounding the nuances of leaving evangelicalism while still identifying as evangelical will be provided in the following implications.

Table 4. Stages of Faith.

Faith Stage	Approx. Age	Characteristics
1. Intuitive - Projective	3-7	Religion is learned through stories, images, and parents.
2. Mystical - Literal	Pre-adolescent	Strong belief in reciprocity and God's ability to ensure justice; God becomes anthropomorphic; symbols and metaphors are taken literally.
3. Synthetic - Conventional	Adolescence-adulthood	Unquestionable commitment to community and institutions; unaware of socio-political realities and its impact on worldview; conformity to rituals and values without critical analysis; no personal responsibility or ownership of one’s beliefs.
4. Individuative - Reflective	25-40	Caused by a jarring experience (leaving home, hypocrisy of authority, personal encounter with people outside their faith tradition); critical analysis of one’s faith; personal ownership of values; deconstructing of symbols/rituals; understanding socio-political systems and their effect on belief systems.
5. Conjunctive	Midlife-Crisis	Occurs during a midlife crisis; acknowledgment of paradox and transcendence; holds the tension of deconstruction and mystic power of symbols/rituals; embrace of the multidimensional nature of “truth”; vulnerable to accepting other truths in different faith systems; movement from individualistic thinking to constructivist learning.
6. Universalizing	Almost never obtained	Reserved for faith heroes like Gandhi, the Buddha, Saint Teresa, MLK, and Jesus; radical orthopraxy founded upon universal compassion and justice.

The themes in this research revealed critical implications for the faith and multicultural development of White counseling students socialized by evangelicalism as well as various programmatic supports professors can offer to assist students in these developmental processes. Regarding faith and multicultural development, this research includes discussions concerning the participants’ experiences of compounded isolation and religious trauma, gatekeeping in counselor education, ongoing bias-checking, ethical referral boundaries, and the moral landscape of multiculturalism. Under the umbrella of programmatic support, there are several implications concerning the scope of practice surrounding religious/spiritual

competencies, the importance of mentor support and diverse relationships in counseling programs, and religious-cultural appropriation.

Faith Development

The participants' experiences offer painful revelations regarding faith development. Although all their stories were different, they all endured significant grief both interpersonally and intrapersonally. Placed within the context of Fowler's faith development theory, the participants' movement from stage three (synthetic-conventional) to stage four (individuative-reflective) invited significant resistance from their faith community. In many ways, religious institutions may have a vested interest in holding their congregants at stage three. This is not to say religious institutions are inherently controlling, but without proper reflection, religious institutions wishing to consolidate power and exert dominance will have more success in doing so when their congregants adhere to a rigid power structure and a specific interpretation of scripture. Additionally, because evangelicalism and a large portion of Western Christianity are concerned with knowing biblical truth with certainty, doubt or alternative theological assumptions are often seen as a threat to that ethos. Consequently, it is no surprise that many adults never graduate from stage three in their faith development. The cost may seem too insurmountable for some. For the participants, compounded isolation and religious trauma were among a few of those costs.

Compounded Isolation

As stated in the results, the participants faced significant social barriers from both their religious and counseling communities as they pushed through their faith development process. In this way, several of the participants faced a compounded feeling of isolation as their counseling community did not understand their religious background and their evangelical community did not understand their counselor development. This compounded isolation is one of the most significant moments of faith disorientation for some of my participants, especially those who were in institutions that could not relate to their religious background and evolution.

Faith disorientation is not only an intrapersonal experience but also an interpersonal experience between relationships and communities. This finding underscores the importance of developing spiritually competent counselor educators and students not only to support the developmental needs of students experiencing faith disorientation but to also learn how to assist clients facing similar spiritual concerns.

Religious Trauma and Critique of Evangelicalism

Although trauma's definition has developed to be interpreted as an acute, violent event; in the context of religious trauma, I am using the word according to its Greek meaning, wound, to describe the psychological injuries of everyday life known to all people. Evangelicals and counselor educators may easily dismiss some of the participants' religious trauma and criticisms of evangelicalism as overstated or anomalies of evangelical culture. To be fair, perhaps some of these experiences are anomalies. The purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize but to richly describe the human experience of a phenomenon in a way that cannot be achieved through statistics. Regardless, if the participants' descriptions seem overstated to readers, this phenomenon may be better understood as a reflection of participants' deconstruction process and communication of that process rather than a reflection of the validity of their description. For example, the work of faith deconstruction involves undressing the covert trauma that manifests within a religious culture or system, and not everybody is developmentally ready to understand the conclusions engendered by that process. Stated differently, the act of excavating covert oppression can appear foreign and incredulous to the untrained person who has no practice decoding cultural subtleties. In this way, the participants make the covert aggressions known, and in doing so, their descriptions may come across as unrecognizable to those who cannot see past their cultural guise. For example, to those who have no practice with deconstruction, short-term mission trips appear to aid marginalized people, but for the participants who have practiced decoding cultural messages, they see the paternalism of evangelicalism and infantilization of another culture, despite whatever intentions these trips hold.

Looking at this dynamic in the context of Fowler's faith developmental theory, most of the religious trauma, abuse, and oppression are not obvious, especially to the religious insider at stage three of their faith development. However, all the participants demonstrated characteristics of stage four or higher. Thinking at these higher faith stages means the participants can readily identify with surgical precision the function of marginalization and exclusion within evangelical messaging; these functions are often obscured by cultural subtleties. In a poststructuralist fashion, the participants are dissecting within evangelicalism what is *not* being said, who is *not* represented, how communication and ideas are constructed, and what function this communication serves and why. This was clearly demonstrated when Jessica said, "We've never as a family had a conversation about trans people, and that's like half of my work. I think that there are decisions of omission on the part of my parents that are telling."

Multicultural Development

The participants' varied responses on multicultural counseling hold several implications regarding the continued multicultural development of evangelical and post-evangelical White Christian counseling students. Not surprisingly, the participants' multicultural awareness and responses were scattered all over the landscape of development and understanding. The findings provide a rich discussion regarding gatekeeping within counselor education, ongoing multicultural development of post-evangelicals, education on ethical referrals, and multicultural morality.

Additionally, it is important to note that whiteness serves as the backdrop behind these multicultural discussions and results, especially as they relate to race. Both the participants and I are White, and as such, we are all at various stages along the continuous process of unpacking our whiteness. In other words, we are developing an awareness of what it means to be socialized as White people, how white privilege shields us from understanding that socialization, how we enact aversive racism, and discovering how often white cultural norms are

unjustly set as the standard for society. As mentioned earlier, this selection of all White participants was purposeful because evangelicalism is considered a “white brand” of Christianity sociologically. However, given this backdrop of whiteness, there are moments where whiteness is demonstrated in the results section mostly by what is not communicated about race and whiteness. For example, most of the participants did not mention race in relationship to evangelicalism or multicultural/faith development unless specifically prompted. Furthermore, none of the participants mentioned their own whiteness in a substantive, direct way or provided meaningful reflection of their own racial identity development. Throughout this discussion, there are several participant responses and implications where multicultural awareness is limited and whiteness contextualizes that limitation.

Gatekeeping

Gatekeeping in counselor education is a critical strategy worth exploring in this discussion of multicultural development. David and Jane indicated they entered their programs with little multicultural competency, which was partially because of their evangelical background. However, as they progressed through their programs and challenged themselves to consider reworking their faith paradigms, they developed higher levels of multicultural understanding and began to distance themselves from their evangelical identity. Given this finding, counselor educators should not overlook the potential development of White evangelical applicants. As stated earlier, not all White evangelicals have the same level of multicultural awareness. Some may demonstrate a high level of awareness. However, all White evangelicals must contend with the ways white evangelical culture has socialized them to varying degrees and consider what impact this has on their multicultural competency.

Gatekeeping in counselor education is an important tool employed primarily for the protection of clients, especially those in the margins of society. If prospective students demonstrate a complete lack of multicultural awareness or cultural humility, the ethical response from faculty is to not admit the student to the counseling program to protect the integrity of the

counseling profession and the safety of clients seeking mental health services. Counselor educators cannot expect all students to demonstrate the same level of multicultural competency coming into the program, and there is a shared responsibility between the professors and the students to develop their multicultural competency while in the program. Therefore, counselor educators need to assess not only where an applicant is in their multicultural development, but also their potential for multicultural growth. For example, there is a wide difference between a student who says, "I believe that same-sex marriage is wrong, and I will not counsel gay people if their counseling goals are incongruent with my beliefs" and a student who says, "I was raised in a cultural context that believes same-sex marriage as wrong, but I understand I have a limited understanding, that LGBTQ people have been marginalized from my cultural community, and I am open to challenging some of the assumptions I did not question before." The first example demonstrates no current potential for multicultural development and should not be admitted to a counseling program. However, the second example, although limited in multicultural competency, demonstrates cultural humility, an openness to move from stage three to four in their faith development, and may develop into a culturally competent counselor over time. David and Jane represent that second example and the beauty of seeing multicultural awareness unfold throughout their program.

"There is No Choir"

Another important implication regarding multicultural development is the necessity of ongoing bias-checking. Before examining this implication further, it may be helpful to highlight Robin DiAngelo's (2018) phrase "*There is no choir*," a phrase she frequently uses while talking to White people about their racism. As a White anti-racist educator, DiAngelo recounts hearing familiar refrains from her White participants like the colloquialism "you're preaching to the choir" or "I wish Greg was here; he's the one who really needs to hear this." This response, she argues, is a predictable behavioral pattern of "racially progressive" White people, but the reality is, "There is no choir." In other words, DiAngelo is stating the fact that White people are never,

at least in this present historical/cultural context, separate from their racial biases. White people can certainly demonstrate advanced levels of racial awareness, but White people are never done in their racial development or beyond reexamining the covert ways they enact unconscious racism. In fact, the moment a White person thinks they are part of "the choir" is the very moment they demonstrate a lack of cultural humility and need to engage in self-reflection.

Some participants talked more about their classmate's lack of multicultural awareness than their own, denied they carried biases, or said their biases were toward people who do not support abortion or women in subservient relationships with men. The phrase, "There is no choir," applies here as well. Macrosocial forces like heterosexism and white supremacy are too large to not invade every space in and outside evangelicalism. They are present, ongoing dynamics that manifest in all religions, educational institutions, and political parties. Not all institutions carry the same level of multicultural cultural development or history of oppression. Additionally, those who hold more privileged identities have greater gaps to fill in order to develop cultural humility and awareness because they do not have the same experience of oppression to draw from. However, holding a marginalized identity or being part of a multiculturally aware institution does not absolve a person or an institution from enacting biases toward marginalized people. Multicultural competency is always ongoing.

Additionally, when discussing biases in counselor education, it is often safe for students and counselor educators to disclose biases toward those who demonstrate, or who are often associated with demonstrating, a lack of cultural awareness. For example, depending on the institution, the personal disclosure of biases against "Trump supporters" is relatively safe in counselor education programs, especially if you are White. It signals, "I'm multiculturally progressive, and you don't have to worry about me." Of course, these biases need interrogating too, but in general, these disclosures do not risk much, if any, reputational damage. Furthermore, they can serve as a distraction or obfuscation from examining the riskier admission of heterosexist and racist biases. In conclusion, counselor educators may face a

unique challenge in helping students, particularly those who are more multiculturally aware, recommit to reflecting on their biases and continue their ongoing multicultural development. In this case, no amount of religious deconstruction saves one from their ongoing bias-checking, even toward marginalized communities.

Unethical Referrals

In addition to ongoing multicultural development, another finding worth investigating is how students are understanding ethical referrals according to the ACA Code of Ethics. One of my participants mentioned how she does not counsel cisgender, heterosexual White men because this group does not fit into her demographic, therapeutic niche. Therapists specifying that they only work with a certain demographic (i.e., men or women) based on their preferences or comfort is not an uncommon practice, but it is nonetheless unethical according to the 2014 ACA Code of Ethics (Kaplan et al., 2017). The 2014 ACA Code of Ethics only permits counselors to refer clients out based on a lack of clinical or skill-based competency in helping the client address whatever goals they have for counseling. For example, counseling programs teach that it is unethical to refer gay or transgender clients because of counselor-client value incongruencies. Working with a gay or transgender client is not a clinical specialty, as there is nothing clinical about being gay or transgender. A counselor who has no expertise in gender reassignment or hormone therapy may ethically refer a client out if that client is seeking this clinical expertise. However, counselors may not refer transgender or gay clients who are working on coping with generalized anxiety, building healthy romantic relationships, or clarifying their values. These are not clinical specialties akin to eating disorders, schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, or working with small children requiring play therapy.

Following these ethical codes means counseling programs also have a duty to expand examples of unethical referrals to include the practice of referring out people based on preference or discomfort. The ACA prioritizes the health and wellbeing of the client over the counselor’s feelings of therapeutic fit. Because working any combination of demographics

across race, gender, or sexual orientation is not a clinical specialty or area of expertise, the therapist is not ethically permitted to refuse clients based on these identities, even if the therapist does not feel like they are a good therapeutic match. If a counselor is uncomfortable with a certain demographic of clients, they should work this out in supervision or in consultation with other psychotherapists.

Morality

The theme of moral boundaries, especially in relation to multiculturalism, elicited concerning areas of multicultural development among some of the participants. A few of the participants learned to remove some behaviors and ideas from moral categories constructed by evangelicalism and instead hold them in a place of relativity. While this is certainly helpful, especially when examining amoral cultural behaviors and ideas, it is problematic to relegate all ideas surrounding multiculturalism in terms of “a perspective” and void of any moral consequence. For example, one participant discussed perspectives on race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality as “perspectives” with no implications of right or wrong. The meaning of this comment was nebulous, and I cannot jump to conclusions about her meaning. However, it deserves some further investigation.

While this idea of moral relativity may seem accommodating, in some contexts, it can serve to protect and tolerate uninformed perspectives that certainly do have moral implications. For example, the decision to ban critical race theory from being taught in public schools is not merely a perspective; these are racist policies with moral implications. These policies dismiss decades of peer-reviewed research developed by Black scholars and use the standard of whiteness to police how race is discussed by teachers under its jurisdiction. Either the policy is morally right or wrong; there is no neutrality between racist and anti-racist thought. Either one works against racism in an active, ongoing posture, or they are complicit in upholding the status quo, which presently is white supremacy in this cultural context (Kendi, 2019). The same logic holds true for heterosexism and patriarchy. Either one accepts the status quo and protects

heterosexism, or they actively fight against it. These are not merely perspectives without moral consequences. Furthermore, having strong opinions about race, gender, and sexual orientation does not equate to having informed, cogent perspectives. Not all perspectives on multicultural concerns carry equal validity.

Programmatic Support

The themes of mentor support, a lack of understanding from the counseling community, and religious expansiveness suggest several pedagogical implications to support for students moving through their faith developmental process. While the participants and literature suggest gaps within counselor education in regard to spiritual competency and faith development, several of the participants had useful insight into how counseling programs might remedy these gaps. Additionally, there are some cultural factors to consider in the experiential understanding and practice of spiritual development.

Spiritual Competency and Scope of Practice

Jane experienced a general lack of spiritual competency within her counselor education program and provided several insights regarding how a counseling program might better develop spiritual/religious competency while maintaining a clear scope of practice. Her insight included the observation that spiritual competency should be implemented just like any other competency taught across counseling programs. Furthermore, as this research has stated repeatedly, spiritual competency is part of multicultural competency. Any robust multicultural program must consider the counselor's and client's spiritual/religious framework as a cultural variable. As Jane stated, this does not mean counselor educators need a robust understanding of theological constructs across any or all religions. However, in theory, they should have some understanding of how faith development works, the tensions students face at different stages in that developmental process, how multicultural and faith development are parallel processes, and how faith development impacts their relationships with clients.

Additionally, counselor educators are not responsible for the theological positions students hold, nor is it within the counselor educator's scope of practice to interrogate theological constructs from a religious perspective. This does not mean all theological assumptions are equally valid, but counselor educators are not equipped with the same erudition or educational charge of scholars who hold doctorates in divinity, biblical studies, or ancient biblical languages/culture. The counselor educator's fidelity is to the ACA Code of Ethics and the clients their students serve both in their field experience and post-graduation. Therefore, when students experience tension between their theological assumptions and ethical practice, the counselor educator's role is not to change the student's theological assumptions but to let ethical practice impact their theological paradigms or application of those paradigms. Additionally, faith development theories allow counselor educators and students room to explore what the trajectory of faith development looks like and how their theology or application of theology fits within that model. In this way, counselor educators can come alongside students similar to the way they would assist clients by exploring what impact their theology, or its application, has on their relationships, their conceptualization of God and themselves, their counseling practice, their pursuit of justice and advocacy, and their faith and multicultural development. They may conclude that they need a new theological paradigm, as David did when he said, "If your theology hurts people, you need a new theology." However, the student needs the autonomy to come to their own conclusions about their theology; otherwise, counselor educators risk infantilizing students, engaging in theological sparring from an uninformed position, and robbing students of their developmental process.

Of course, the students' theological struggle may lead to faith disorientation in the same or divergent ways demonstrated by the participants. However, faith disorientation is a normal part of faith development and a sign of growth. Furthermore, students can seek out support from scholars who have a background in their faith tradition to glean a wider perspective if that is what they are seeking. The counselor educator's role is to help their students develop ethical

practice and to provide a supportive space for them to disrupt and reorient their faith paradigms if they choose that path.

Regarding evangelical students, the students are responsible for their faith identity formation. It is not the goal of counselor educators to move students from an evangelical identity to a post-evangelical identity. Retaining an evangelical identity does not unequivocally disqualify someone from developing multicultural awareness. Although this type of evangelical is an anomaly within evangelical culture, the literature on the New Evangelicals and Jane's experience with her evangelical friends (see Evangelical Juxtaposition theme) substantiate the idea that evangelicals can and do develop deeper multicultural awareness and challenge evangelical culture without de-identifying as evangelical. Furthermore, although evangelical culture is restrictive, the academic definition of an evangelical based on the Bebbington quadrilateral leaves a substantial amount of room for nuance in Christian belief and practice. Stated differently, there is a space where someone can identify as an evangelical while distancing themselves from evangelical culture; the two are not necessarily the same constructs. If students can find a way to practice ethically while retaining an evangelical identity and challenging evangelical culture's multicultural assumptions, that is just as admirable as the student willing to reconstruct a new faith identity.

Mentor Support

In addition to developing spiritual competencies in counselor education, counseling mentors who are Christian and multiculturally competent can be tremendous assets to White evangelical counseling students. Both Jane and David were in the process of moving away from their evangelical identity and relied heavily on Christian-identified supervisors and professors to help them along with their faith development. The intersection of the counselor and Christian identities is an invaluable asset to evangelical students working out their faith because these mentors model the integration of a Christian and counselor identity in a way that students cannot learn from anyone else. Counselors who happen to be Christian open possibilities,

direction, and paradigms within the counselor/faith identity development that may take students years to discover on their own. Furthermore, these mentors often understand the struggle evangelical counseling students face as they move through faith disorientation in ways that other counseling mentors cannot readily access through their lived experience.

Religious-Cultural Appropriation

Although spiritual/religious experiential learning is an important avenue counseling programs can use to develop spiritual competencies, programs must exercise caution to avoid religious-cultural appropriation. For example, Julie talked about how important experiencing other religions and spiritual practices was to her faith development and spiritual expansiveness. While this experiential pedagogical approach is useful, there must be considerations of how spiritual practices are taught and experienced by students. Without critical awareness and consideration, there is a risk that students outside of a faith tradition may appropriate religious traditions and practices that do not belong to them. For example, there is a critical distinction between non-Buddhist people who can honor Buddhist practices and values and those who have little to no knowledge of Buddhism and place Buddha statues in their garden because it says something about their “spiritual but not religious” aesthetic. In the same way that it would not be appropriate to offer the Eucharist to counseling students in an educational setting for the purpose of merely “experiencing” a spiritual practice, it may not be appropriate to implement another religious/spiritual practice unique to other religious traditions. It may be difficult to delineate what is appropriate to practice and what may be cultural appropriation. For example, meditation is a Buddhist practice, but meditation exists independently from Buddhism, is a part of many religious traditions, and serves a bio-psycho-spiritual purpose that transcends any religious practice. In contrast, experiencing ayahuasca, communion, or Seder is unique to a specific religious-cultural group and therefore is reserved for a specific cultural context or group. Only the religious-cultural group owning their respective religious rituals can be the arbitrators of how their rituals are employed and who gets to participate in them.

Relational Learning

Another common theme discussed was the significance of student learning through diverse relationships. These relationships were foundational in building students' faith and multicultural development. The implication here is that while it may be tempting to intellectualize faith and multicultural development, students need to experience through relationships with classmates, professors, supervisors, and clients. Many of the participants experienced a gradual change in their attitudes toward LGBTQ people as they built relationships with them. In this way, learning, especially in the counseling profession, is not only a cognitive exercise but also an experiential one. Imagine if counseling programs graduated students without a practicum or internship experience. Those students could have all the cognitive knowledge from textbooks about theories, techniques, assessments, and diagnosis, but they would still be woefully unprepared to practice and understand their clients. In the same way, students are considerably unprepared in their faith and multicultural development if they are not actively engaged in sustained, meaningful relationships with people from different religious backgrounds, races, sexual orientations, and gender identities. This highlights the significance of representation and diversity among students, professors, supervisors, and clients. Furthermore, as the profession moves to more online educational formats, counselor educators must find creative ways to utilize better relationship-building opportunities through technology while also weighing online convenience against the irreplaceable relationship opportunities that accompany the sharing of physical space.

Limitations

There were several limitations worth noting in this study. The first is the homogeneity of the participants. Aside from one participant in the pilot study, no participants identified as being a part of the LGBTQ community. These voices would add another layer and description to the investigated phenomenon. Furthermore, because LGBTQ identities contrast sharply with what is normative in evangelical culture, having their voices included in the results would add richness

to the study. The other limitation was the RFDS. This scale was only marginally useful. The individual questions provided some indication of where a participant was at in their faith development, but some of the questions rewarded strong disagreement with the participants' church or family (see Appendix B). This assessment design choice is understandable if the participant is coming from a religious institution or social structure that holds people at stage three in their faith development, but it does not accurately describe those who belong to a religious institution or social structure that encourages doubt and theological exploration. This scale unfairly penalizes the latter group in its overall assessment.

Future Research

There are a few directions worth considering in future research. For example, what are the perspectives of counselor educators or non-evangelical students concerning their White evangelical peers? How does their faith background impact their perceptions and relationships with White evangelical students? The same questions could be asked of clients interacting with White evangelicals or post-evangelicals. Additionally, this research explores students who still identify as Christian. Future research could consider students who moved to a different religious system or no religious system. It may also be enlightening to research White evangelical students who continue identifying as evangelical and graduate to higher multicultural and faith development stages or examine those who do stagnate. This question was mentioned earlier, but future research on how technology impacts students' exposure to diversity and their ability to cultivate diverse relationships is also worth exploring.

Researchers could also explore the faith development of Black and LGBTQ Christians in counselor education. Both these groups have unique perspectives to add to this discussion and would require a different set of questions. For example, how does the counseling community understand LGBTQ Christians, and does that community see those identities at odds? If so, how do LGBTQ Christians experience that dynamic? Regarding Black Christians, how do they

experience their White Christian peers or the culture of evangelicalism? Do they feel supported in their faith development by their counseling community?

Developing new faith development theories is also an area needing additional focus. Fowler's theory dates back to the 1980s, is normed after a highly homogeneous sample, and although it works fairly well with this study's demographic focus, it is not sufficient for describing all faith development processes across all demographics and faith traditions. Furthermore, Fowler's theory is the most widely applied theory in faith development research despite its own narrow application to a mostly White, Judeo-Christian sample. For this reason, scholars may need to develop new models to better capture the developmental process of people in the 21st century or that better describe faith development across different demographics and faith traditions.

Additionally, CACREP-institutional misalignment needs additional research. Elizabeth discussed how her university's culture was misaligned with CACREP values. However, she said CACREP shielded her counseling program from being adversely impacted by the university's position on gender and sexuality. While it seems fair to say that CACREP does provide these programs some shielding, the belief these programs are totally unaffected by the university's misalignment is dubious. University culture and vision have wide implications for the hiring of faculty, how multicultural and ethics courses are taught, what type of student the university attracts, and how these student/faculty demographics impact multicultural education. A quantitative assessment comparing students' multicultural competencies across CACREP-accredited programs from aligned and misaligned institutions may yield valuable data on this topic.

There is also a high need for interdisciplinary research and practice between counselor educators and divinity scholars. For reasons stated earlier regarding counselor education's scope of practice, this research intentionally does not discuss the validity of theological paradigms aligning with counselor and multicultural ethics. Nor does it interrogate any

theological assumptions using biblical hermeneutics. Because evangelicals have a high regard for the Bible, they will likely need research on church/theological history and biblical hermeneutics to further understand the origins of their beliefs and to investigate the validity of competing Christian beliefs. Divinity and counseling scholars working in tandem have the potential to help a tremendous number of students along in their faith development through interdisciplinary research and practice.

Conclusion

In light of this research and discussion, several of the implications mentioned earlier require action from professors, supervisors, and counseling governance. Counselor educators need to recognize religion as a multicultural variable—meaning religious systems have a history, culture, and socialization process. As with any multicultural variable, professors have a responsibility to integrate it within multicultural development, and they must have the language to explore with students their religious upbringing and how that impacts their work with clients. Similarly, supervisors need to address how spirituality/religion comes up in their trainees' counseling sessions. Are trainees overlooking religion/spirituality when it is important to the client? If so, why? Are they pejoratively reducing religion/spirituality down to a "coping skill," or do they honor that identity as they would any other identity the client holds? What biases do trainees, supervisors, and counselor educators have toward people's faith, sexuality, race, or gender given their history with religious traditions? These discussions are too important to be overlooked or to let students sort out these developmental processes on their own.

Both the ACA and CACREP need to provide more clarity around counseling ethics and values. If CACREP claims counselors are to advocate for marginalized populations and remove systemic barriers, then what does that mean for universities that have a history of embodying systemic barriers while holding CACREP-accredited counseling programs? What does it mean to remove systemic barriers, what accountability do accredited programs have to practice that ethic, and when is a program disqualified for receiving accreditation based on the institutional

culture/values? Regarding the ACA, what client-counselor value incongruencies are a matter of perspective, and what incongruencies prohibit a counselor from providing liberatory healing? Finally, the ACA needs to include faith/spirituality as a multicultural variable like race, gender, and sexuality. In doing so, the counseling curriculum may adjust to include faith more robustly in multicultural discussions and education.

The purpose of this study was to explore White Christian post-evangelical counseling students' experiences of faith disorientation and resolution in counselor education. The results suggest these participants experienced disorientation surrounding their religious beliefs as well as their faith and counseling communities. Many of them found resolution through mentor support, spiritual expansiveness and inclusion, and their fidelity to sound counseling practice. Understanding these dynamics as they relate to counselor education programs can help counselor educators continue to support the faith and multicultural development of White evangelical and post-evangelical Christian students and the clients they serve.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Pilot Study Demographic Questionnaire

See the questionnaire on the following page.

Q First name

____

Q Last name

____

Q Email address

____

Q Do you agree with this statement?

Jesus is the only path to salvation, the Bible is the ultimate source of truth, I have the responsibility to share the Gospel with others in hopes that they become born again as Christians, and I have the responsibility to live out my faith in all areas of life.

- o Yes, I agree with this statement (1)
- o No, I don't agree with some or all of these beliefs (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you agree with this statement? I believe that Jesus is the only way to salvation, the Bible is... = No, I don't agree with some or all of these beliefs

Q What racial identity best describes you?

- o White (1)
- o BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color) (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If What racial identity best describes you? = BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color)

Q I will be enrolled in a master's counseling program that is CACREP-accredited in the Fall of 2021 at a secular university, and I am not an NC State University student.

- o Yes (1)
- o No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If I will be enrolled in a master's counseling program that is CACREP-accredited in the Fall of 2021... = No

Q Please select or write in the descriptions that describe you and your context best.

Q Counseling concentration

- o School Counseling (1)
- o Clinical Mental Health Counseling (2)
- o College Counseling (3)
- o Other (4)

Q After the pandemic, will your counseling program require you to attend class in person?

- o Yes (1)
- o No, I'm fully online (2)

Q Gender

____

Q Sexual Orientation

____

Q By Fall 2021 I will have completed ____ credit hours in the program.

- o 0-9 (1)
- o 10-19 (2)
- o 20-29 (3)
- o 30-39 (4)
- o 40-49 (5)
- o 50-60 (6)

Q Geographical location of my counseling program

▼ Northeast (1) ... West (5)

Q In miles, about how far is your counseling program from your family?

____

Q In miles, about how far is your counseling program from your church. If you do not currently attend church, you may skip this question.

____

Q On average, I attend church ______

o Once or more than once a week (1)

o Twice a month (2)

o Once a month (3)

o Infrequently, less than once a month (4)

o Never (5)

Q Please copy and paste the personal statement you used to gain admission to the counseling program you're enrolled in.

This document will be analyzed for common themes, and I may paraphrase some of the content in the study. I will not be quoting any of your personal statement in the study to protect your confidentiality. Your anonymity is of the utmost importance to me.

____

____

____

____

Appendix B: Revised Faith Development Scale

Q Select your level of agreement with each statement (see next page)

	strongly disagree (1)	disagree (2)	agree (3)	strongly agree (4)
1. My religious orientation comes primarily from my church and the people who first taught me about my faith	o	o	o	o
2. It is not important that I keep the same religious views as my family of origin	o	o	o	o
3. The religious traditions and beliefs I grew up with are very important to me and do not need changing	o	o	o	o
4. My religious orientation comes primarily from my own efforts to analyze and understand God	o	o	o	o
5. I would rather not be exposed to other religions	o	o	o	o

6. The religious traditions and beliefs I grew up with have become less and less relevant to my current religious orientation.	o	o	o	o
7. I believe that my church has much to offer but that other religions can also provide many religious insights.	o	o	o	o
8. I believe totally (or almost totally) the teachings of my church.	o	o	o	o
9. I am interested in learning more about other religions.	o	o	o	o
10. It is very important for me to critically examine my religious beliefs and values	o	o	o	o

11. As my religious views have changed, I find that I sometimes disagree with my family of origin about my faith	o	o	o	o
12. It is rare for me to disagree with church leadership or my family origin about my faith	o	o	o	o
13. It is very important that my faith is very much like the faith of my parents and family of origin	o	o	o	o
14. I find myself disagreeing with my church over numerous aspects of my faith	o	o	o	o
15. I believe that my church offers a full insight into what God wants for us and how we should worship God	o	o	o	o

16. It is very important for me to accept the religious beliefs and values of my church (17)	o	o	o	o

Items 1, 3, 5, 8, 12, 13, 15, and 16 are reverse scored.