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Edina Renfro-Michel

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## *The Journal of Counselor Preparation & Supervision*



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The mission of the *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision* is to provide a high quality platform for research, theory and practices of counselor educators, counselor supervisors and professional counselors. We believe the journal chronicles current issues, concerns and potential solutions that enable counselors to continue to grow and develop as practitioners, educators and human beings. The journal publishes high-quality articles that have undergone a thorough and extensive blind peer-review.

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There are six general categories that help focus the content of the journal.

**Research.** These articles focus on research (qualitative, quantitative, mixed) in counselor preparation, professional development, supervision, and professional practice.

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# The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision

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## Editorial

Edina Renfro-Michel

## Featured Articles

### Research

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#### **Who's to Blame? Client Problems and the Causal Attributions Made by Counselors-in-training**

Joseph M. Williams, Arie T. Greenleaf, & David K. Duys

#### **Exploring the Multicultural Competence of School Counselors**

Fallon K. Dodson

#### **Self-Efficacy of Beginning Counselors to Counsel Clients in Crisis**

Cheryl Sawyer, Michelle L. Peters, & Jana Willis

### Theory

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#### **School Counseling Supervision in Challenging Times: The CAFE Supervisor Model**

Melissa S. Ockerman, Erin C. M. Mason, & Stuart F. Chen-Hayes

# Editorial

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This issue of JCPS includes research and theory articles providing information for counselor educators to improve counselor training. As per the mission of the journal, we welcome all submissions in the following categories: research, techniques, counselor development, supervision issues, informed practice, clinical supervisor's stories, and book reviews related to counselor education and supervision.

Overall, this issue provides information regarding how counselor educators can provide counselors-in-training with an understanding of clients holistically, and to provide multicultural training throughout the program, helping students to understand clients from a variety of perspectives. While this viewpoint is not new in counselor education, the contributing authors of this issue add to the literature significantly.

Williams, Greenleaf, and Duys in "Who's to blame? Client problems and the causal attributions made by counselors-in-training" identify how counseling students view the creation and solving of client problems differently depending on area of concentration, completed course hours, and counselor ethnicity. In "Exploring the multicultural competence of school counselors" Dodson provides some surprising results regarding multicultural competency. In "Self-efficacy of beginning counselors to counsel clients in crisis" Sawyer, Peters, and Willis investigated the effectiveness of a Crisis Intervention course and provided information for Counselor Educators on ways to increase counselors-in-training perceived ability to effectively handle crisis situations. Within the framework of providing more effective training for counselors, Ockerman, Mason and Chen-Hayes in "School counseling supervision in challenging times: The CAFE supervisor model" discuss systemic change through using the CAFE model during the training and supervision of school counselors.

As editor, I want to thank all of the dedicated reviewers who responded quickly to everything asked of them, and helped to produce high quality manuscripts for JCPS. I also thank my wonderful Editorial Assistant Jonathan Mazza. He spent endless hours organizing the process, working with reviewers and authors, editing articles, putting everything together, all while integrating everything to our new site on Digital Commons. Additionally, I thank the NARACES Board for giving me the opportunity to continue to share practical research and knowledge with our members by appointing me as editor of the *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, Western Connecticut University for hosting us on Digital Commons, and Bepress for their support as we migrate to our new site.

Edina Renfro-Michel, **Editor**

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# Who's to blame? Client Problems and the Causal Attributions Made by Counselors-in-training

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Joseph M. Williams, Arie T. Greenleaf, & David K. Duys

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The researchers examined the relationship between cognitive complexity, attribution styles, and demographic variables of 86 counselors-in-training concerning the cause of and solution to clients' problems. A significant relationship was found between counselors' moral attribution styles and cognitive complexity levels. Differences were found in general preferences for specific attribution styles for the counselors studied as well as by training level. Implications of the findings for counselor preparation and training are discussed.

*Keywords:* Attributions, Counselor Preparation, Cognitive Complexity

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The attributions that counselors make regarding the cause of and solution to clients' problems directly affect both the counseling process and the client outcomes (e.g., symptom reduction, behavior change, or quality of life improvement; Stepleman, Darcy, & Tracey, 2005; Wall & Hayes, 2000). Researchers have argued that the attributions counselors make about their clients' problems have a direct influence on: selection of counseling strategies (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2000); formation and completion of counseling goals; evaluation of treatment success (Kernes & McWhirter, 2001); assessment of the issues presented by the client (Hayes & Wall, 1998); decision-making process (Jackson, Holt, & Nelson, 2005); recognition of symptoms (Murdock & Fremont, 1989); case conceptualization processes; early termination rates (Tracey, 1988; Worthington & Atkinson, 1993); the counseling relationship and therapeutic alliance (Wall & Hayes, 2000); and the overall quality of service delivery (Stepleman et al., 2005).

Despite the significant role counselor attributions demonstrably have in relation to both the counseling process and client outcomes, little is known about the factors that influence how attributions about clients' problems are made. In the last two decades, only a few studies have focused on this issue, factor influence and counselor attribution (Kernes & McWhirter, 2001; Murdock & Fremont, 1989; Stepleman et al., 2005; Tracey, 1988; Wall & Hayes, 2000; Worthington & Atkinson, 1993; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2000). Thus, an examination of personal variables that may contribute to the attribution styles constructed by counselors-in-training may be an important focus for research and may have implications for therapist training and practice. For the purpose of this research study, attributions are defined as inferences counselors make regarding the cause of and solution to difficulties reported by clients (Brickman et al., 1982).



## **Cognitive Complexity and Conceptualization of Client Problems**

Cognitive complexity is one variable that can impact counselor attribution styles. Cognitive complexity is “the ability to absorb, integrate, and make use of multiple perspectives” (Granello, 2010, p. 92). Counselors frequently manage multiple variables when assessing their clients' problems; and cognitive complexity can be viewed as the method used to differentiate and organize those variables. Numerous factors can impact the myriad responsibilities inherent in counseling, including: gathering multiple sources of data and looking at the consistency in information from these data (i.e., referral information, client statements, nonverbal cues, histories, and test results); formulating hypotheses concerning the nature, origin, and treatment of client issues; attending to multicultural dynamics; understanding the counseling process; and utilizing counseling theories, each of which require complex cognitive processes (Pfeiffer, Whelan, & Martin, 2000; Stoltenberg, McNeill, & Delworth, 1998).

The importance of developing a counselor's cognitive complexity skills is clear, considering its impact on treatment decisions. Fortunately, it's been shown that cognitive complexity responds and develops well within closely supervised training experiences (Duys & Hedstrom, 2000). From these experiences, a counselor's cognitive complexity is usually able to demonstrate an improvement in several clinically beneficial areas. Researchers have found that higher conceptually functioning counselors are: (a) less apt to consider their clients in a negative light, more objective when reporting events in sessions, and are more focused on the counseling process (Borders, 1989); (b) more comfortable with ambiguity, more multiculturally sensitive, more confident, and demonstrably less biased and anxious (Jennings & Skovholt, 1999); and (c) more flexible in the selection of counseling strategies and are more empathic communicators (Benack, 1988). Considering the array of problems facing today's client, it is more critical than ever to further these higher-level counseling skills through cognitive complexity development within all counselor-in-training programs. The authors define cognitive complexity as the degree of social differentiation or the number of interpersonal constructs a person can use to define social reality (Crockett, 1965; Kelly, 1955).

## **Brickman's Models of Helping and Coping**

A useful approach to understanding counselors' attribution styles can be found in Brickman et al.'s (1982) four models of helping and coping. Brickman et al.'s (1982) models of helping and coping provide a theoretical framework for assessing and classifying the specific types of behaviors counselors engage in when they try to help others or themselves. These models describe case conceptualization polarities using a combination of possibilities that attribute whether clients are held responsible or not for causing and solving their problems. The models focus on three areas: the decisions counselors make to help their clients (i.e., material aid, psychotherapy, support groups, etc.), which choices are most appropriate, and the consequences of those choices. For example, counselors who hold clients responsible for the cause of and solution to their problems may have different expectations for their clients than a counselor who acknowledges the influences that multiple ecological systems have on a client's well-being.

Brickman's et al.'s (1982) four orientations of helping and coping attribute whether a person has a high or a low self-responsibility for the cause and solution to personal issues and problems, with the attribution made to one of the four models. The Moral model is the first

choice (in no particular order), and according to its perspective, clients are attributed the responsibility for creating their problems and likewise, solving them. Problems are seen as resulting from the lack of effort deemed necessary and sufficient to create change. Counselors who ascribe to the Moral model remind clients of their personal responsibility for overcoming their problems. In contrast, counselors who subscribe to the second model, the Medical model, see clients as having low responsibility for both the cause of and solution to their problems. Counselors who endorse the Medical model view clients as incapable of helping themselves without expert assistance. The third model, the Enlightenment model, posits that clients are not responsible for the solutions to their problems, but are held responsible for the cause of their problems. Counselors adhering to the Enlightenment model determine that client difficulties can be solved by enlightening clients to the reality that problems are beyond their control, and that an expert can help create change. Finally, the fourth model, the Compensatory model, views clients as not responsible for causing their problems, but they are responsible for solving them. Problems are seen as resulting from a lack of resources and opportunities necessary to create change. Based on this last model, advocating with and on behalf of clients is an important tool for change, as well as empowering an egalitarian partnering relationship.

As previously mentioned, little is known about the causal attributions that counselors make, or about how those attributions relate to levels of cognitive complexity. To date, no published study has been found that examines the relationship between attribution styles and levels of cognitive complexity. Indeed, the examination of similar attribution variables within the counseling field is relatively nonexistent in the literature and clinical research (Stepleman et al., 2005). Therefore, the purpose of this research study has been to examine the relationship between cognitive complexity and attribution style and the affect several counselor demographic differences have on this relationship. To address this purpose, the researchers posed the following research question: What is the relationship between the level of cognitive complexity and the attribution style of a counselor-in-training? The sub-question was: How are the demographic variables of sex, race/ethnicity, age, program affiliation, theoretical orientation, and level of training related to the attribution styles of counselors-in-training?

## Method

### Participants

The participants were master's-level graduate students enrolled in a counseling program at two Midwestern Universities, both accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Program (CACREP). Eighty-six counselors-in-training volunteered to participate in the research study. The percentage of female and male participants in this study was 84% ( $n = 73$ ) and 15% ( $n = 13$ ) respectively. The ethnic composition (percentages rounded) of participants was 81% Caucasian/White ( $n = 70$ ), 8% African American ( $n = 7$ ), 7% Hispanic/Latino ( $n = 6$ ), 1% Asian/Pacific Islander ( $n = 1$ ), 1% Multiracial ( $n = 1$ ), and 1% Middle Eastern ( $n = 1$ ). The majority of the sample at 47% was aged 25 or under ( $n = 40$ ), 43% of participants were between the ages of 26-40 ( $n = 37$ ), 8% were between ages 41-56 ( $n = 7$ ), and 2% of participants were 57 or older ( $n = 2$ ). Of the 86 graduate students who volunteered to participate in the study, 50% were enrolled in a school counseling program ( $n = 43$ ), 38% mental health counseling ( $n = 33$ ), 8% rehabilitation counseling ( $n = 7$ ), 2% career counseling ( $n = 2$ ), and 1% student affairs/student development ( $n = 1$ ). Perceived theoretical orientation break

down was as follows: 24% Person-Centered ( $n = 21$ ), 17% Cognitive Behavioral ( $n = 15$ ), 17% Adlerian ( $n = 15$ ), 8% Reality ( $n = 7$ ), 5% Existential ( $n = 4$ ), 3% Behavioral ( $n = 3$ ), 3% Eclectic ( $n = 3$ ), 2% Gestalt ( $n = 2$ ), 1% Psychoanalytic ( $n = 1$ ), 1% Humanistic ( $n = 1$ ), 1% Solution Focused ( $n = 1$ ), 1% Family Systems ( $n = 1$ ), and 14% undecided ( $n = 12$ ). Counselors were asked to report the number of completed and currently enrolled credit hours. 34% ( $n = 29$ ) had completed between 0-9 credit hours, 23% ( $n = 20$ ) had completed 10-21 credit hours, 31% ( $n = 27$ ) had completed 22-31 credit hours, and 11 percent ( $n = 10$ ) had completed 32- 41 credit hours. Lastly, 48% ( $n = 41$ ) were currently enrolled in 0-6 credit hours, 50% ( $n = 43$ ) were enrolled in 7-12 credit hours, and 2% ( $n = 2$ ) of participants were currently enrolled in 13-18 credit hours.

## **Instruments**

In this study, attribution styles were measured by the Helping and Coping Orientations Measure (HCOM; Michlitsch & Frankel, 1989). The HCOM was developed to measure how the attribution of a client's responsibility for the cause of and solution to their problem affects counseling interventions, making HCOM valuable in counselor training. The HCOM contains 25 statements related to the general population about which participants in the study indicate their agreement by using a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Each statement relates to one of Brickman et al.'s (1982) four models of helping and coping. The HCOM contains four subscales, each consisting of 5 to 7 items corresponding to the four models of helping and coping (Medical, Enlightenment, Moral, and Compensatory). For example, the statement "For the best results people should rely upon experts to solve their problems" corresponds to the Medical model. The statement "Behind every problem faced is someone not doing something they should have" corresponds to the Enlightenment model. The statement "The real solution to people's problems must come from them" corresponds to the Moral model. Finally, the statement "People are not given an opportunity [to] solve their problems" corresponds to the Compensatory, or Empowerment, model. Participants are classified into the model for which they had the highest subscale score on the HCOM. Internal consistency for the subscales has been reported to range from .56 to .86 (McCracken, Hayes, & Dell, 1997; Michlitsch, & Frankel, 1989), which is generally higher than other instruments used to measure Brickman et al.'s theory (Karuza, Zevon, Gleason, Karuza, & Nash, 1990; Tracey, 1988). In order to directly compare the scale results to each other, the scores on the HCOM were converted to percentiles due to an unequal number of statements associated with each attribution scale.

Cognitive complexity (Crockett, 1965; Kelly, 1955) was measured by the Role Category Questionnaire (Crockett, Press, Delia, & Kenney, 1974), and standardized by Burleson and Waltman (1988). The Role Category Questionnaire (RCQ) consists of two open-ended questions asking the examinee to describe in writing two personally well-known peers. The first peer is identified as someone the examinee likes, and the second is identified as someone the examinee does not like. The RCQ generates a score that is an estimate of social differentiation. This is obtained by counting the number of distinct constructs a person can hold constant at one time about another individual. Because written responses are limited to five minutes per question, responses are considered to be a sample of the participant's level of differentiation or cognitive complexity.

Test-retest reliability values of .84 and .86 for the RCQ over a 1-month period were reported by O'Keefe, Shepherd and Streeter (1982). Another study reported a test-retest

reliability value of .95 over a 4-month period (Crockett et al., 1974). With regard to validity, higher RCQ scores were shown to be positively associated with higher levels of trait differentiation (Meyer, 1996). Persons who scored higher on the RCQ were able to activate more conceptual knowledge of another individual (Meyer, 1996). Higher RCQ scores were found to be associated with higher social cognition skills, such as social perspective-taking and social construct abstractness (O'Keefe & Sypher, 1981). Although positive correlations were found between higher chronological age and elevated scores on the RCQ (Scarlett, Press, & Crockett, 1971), RCQ scores have been shown to be unrelated to intelligence (Allen, Mabry, & Preiss, 1997). The RCQ scores have also been shown to be unrelated to writing skill levels (Burlison & Rowan, 1985).

## Data Collection

The researchers obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before data collection. A brief, prepared script was orally presented to participants in their classrooms by the first author, which outlined key information regarding the proposed study and which invited students to participate on a voluntary, non-incentive basis. Participants responded to a three-part paper-and-pencil survey. In Part 1 of the survey, participants answered multiple choice demographic questions about their sex, age, race/ethnicity, number of course credit hours completed in the counseling program, number of credit hours currently being taken in the counseling program, program affiliation, and preferred theoretical orientation. In Part 2 of the survey, participants filled out the HCOM scale, which queried participants' beliefs about helping. Part 3 of the survey was explained in detail on the subsequent page of the survey. Participants were given 10 minutes to complete the RCQ. The data collection took approximately 25-30 minutes to complete (either before or after class) and was accomplished in multiple classrooms on the campuses of the two Midwestern universities used in the study.

## Results

The present study examined the relationship among cognitive complexity levels, demographic variables, and attribution styles of counselors-in-training. Scores on the RCQ were correlated with the HCOM survey results, along with the identification of demographic variables. The cognitive complexity levels of counselors were somewhat related to attribution. Specifically, RCQ scores and the Moral model were found to be significantly related ( $r = .32, p = .003$ ). While statistically significant, this is a relatively small effect size. Gender differences, race/ethnicity, and attribution styles were not found to be significantly related. However, this may simply be an artifact associated with the small numbers of male participants and persons of color. Completed course hours were found to be negatively correlated with the Enlightenment ( $r = -.227, p = .035$ ) and Medical model attribution styles ( $r = -.223, p = .039$ ).

Counselors showed significant differences between preferences for models when grouped by program affiliation ( $p = .041$ ). Graduate students in school counseling programs scored slightly higher ( $M = 72.7$ ) on the Compensatory model than students in mental health programs ( $M = 69.1$ ). However, a much larger difference ( $p = .000$ ) was observed between counselors' preference for the Compensatory ( $M = 70.74$ ) and Moral ( $M = 70.83$ ) attribution styles versus the Medical ( $M = 45.45$ ) and Enlightenment ( $M = 44.03$ ) attribution styles. Counselors' theoretical orientations and attribution styles were not found to be significantly different. Lastly,

a multiple regression analysis was performed that included all significant correlations described above. This was done to examine the overall contribution of significant variables to variance, as explained by attribution style and the nature of the measured regression slope; results showed no significant findings.

Lastly, multiple regression analyses were performed on the attribution style categories-including all significant correlations described above [A11]. This was done to examine the contribution of these variables to the variance in attribution scores (specifically, the RCQ scores, program membership, and the number of course hours completed). Only the regression results associated with the Enlightenment style showed a significant predictive relationship. The regression model was Enlightenment = 46.3 - 0.072 RCQ + 2.65 Program of Study - 2.18 Completed Credit Hours ( $R = 32.7, p=.026$ ).

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between cognitive complexity and attribution style. In addition, the study investigated how demographic variables of gender, race/ethnicity, program affiliation, theoretical orientation, and level of training related to the attribution styles of counselors-in-training. This study yielded some significant findings.

First, particular attribution styles appear to be positively related with cognitive complexity. In this study, counselors-in-training who ascribed to the Moral model had higher levels of cognitive complexity. The Moral model of helping holds clients responsible for creating and solving their own problems. By extension, counseling interventions based on this model would stress client empowerment, enabling clients to design and effect their own problem-solving actions. The limitation of this perspective, however, is its disregard for the impact of oppression and other external, systemic factors on the well-being of clients. Further, collaborative efforts to develop multi-systemic counseling strategies (i.e., advocacy, social action, partnerships) to overcome barriers may be overlooked (Greenleaf & Williams, 2009).

Second, the number of completed graduate course hours seems to have a negative relationship with certain attribution styles. Specifically, the further students were in their counseling program, the less likely they were to adhere to the Enlightenment and the Medical models of helping and coping, models which attribute low responsibility for clients solving their own problems. This finding seems to support the emphasis that counselor training programs place on client-lead solutions and empowerment approaches. Empowering methods help clients recognize their strengths and abilities, successfully solve future problems on their own, and often relate to shorter periods of treatment for successful change (Kettunen, Poskiparta, & Liimataninen, 2000).

Our third analysis revealed that counselors-in-training showed significant differences between counseling tracks (i.e., school and mental health counseling) and their preferences for specific models of helping and coping. For example, school counselors-in-training scored higher than mental health counselors-in-training on the Compensatory model subscale. Under the Compensatory model, clients are seen as being responsible for overcoming the problems created by barriers and obstacles in their social environment. In order to address these obstacles and barriers, counselors-in-training must learn to collaborate with other individuals and organizations to provide more comprehensive services for their clients. Therefore, counselors-in-training as a whole would do well to familiarize themselves with models of collaboration that guide them in building relationships with clients, families, and communities as partners in the assessment and

treatment process (Bryan, 2009). Such collaborations are important for addressing the social barriers that inhibit client growth and development, and contribute to their problems in living.

Fourth, the Enlightenment regression showed a significant result with the combination of the RCQ score and a counselor-in-training's completed course hours. It appears as students work through their graduate training program, their level of cognitive complexity increases and Enlightenment attribution of client problems decreases. The Enlightenment model views the solution to a client's problem as outside the client; therefore, clients are given scant hope of any real change as a result of their own efforts. The deficiencies of the Enlightenment model include the elevation of a counselor's expertise and the disempowerment of a client to solve personal problems.

Lastly, our fifth result supports Jackson et al.'s (2005) hypothesis that White/Caucasian counselors-in-training may, more often than not, identify with a Moral or a Compensatory model of helping; both share the perspective that clients are ultimately responsible for solving their problems. It remains unknown whether this pattern exists with other racial and culturally marginalized groups.

## **Implications**

Counselors-in-training tend to make individualistic attributions. This means the focus is on individual people and problems, with solutions determined to be found within the client, whether that person has the resiliency or ability to solve issues or not. By locating the cause and solution of the problem strictly within the individual (i.e., the source and solution of the problem lies within the individual), counselors may fail to account for support systems and personal connections within the client's community, church, and family which could be significant factors in facilitating client healing (Minuchin, Colapinto, & Minuchin, 1998). This calls for more exposure to theories that identify the support systems and solutions which are available and may contribute to a healthy, affirmative resolution to the problem.

Counseling training programs which expose students early in their education to systemic/ecological perspective/theories of counseling would allow more time and opportunity for students to develop a broader perspective to the many social justice concerns that inhibit client growth and development. Actual training opportunities where students work directly with various diverse groups, have involvement in service-based learning experiences, and participate in unique practicum/internship situations would heighten awareness of the complexities that contribute to a client's situation. In other words, these opportunities may increase counselors-in-training awareness and understanding of the oppressive and pervasive nature of a client's situation and how it may affect overall well-being.

Moreover, developing the practice of formulating multiple or alternative hypotheses about a client, rather than allowing the first impression to guide the counseling interaction, is important initially and throughout the counseling relationship (Morrow and Deiden, 1992). Attributing problems after all situational factors have been assessed for their possible influences makes for a more confident and accurate decision, and one that will likely include external factors. Counselor educators could focus on multisystem case studies, community genograms, and ecological mapping exercises as a method to improve student case-conceptualizations skills. In addition, multicultural training, experiential learning, diversity discussions, and volunteer opportunities could expand awareness and cultural sensitivity. These opportunities might give

added insight into situational factors, which could help counselors-in-training guard against attribution bias and the determination that problems are solely based on internal factors.

Since the majority of mental health counselors-in-training who are White/Caucasian tend to choose the Moral model, this decision may be influenced by the cultural values and social norms prevalent in society (Sue & Sue, 2003). For example, some cultural value systems (e.g., Asian American, African American, Native American) may instead emphasize external causes for client difficulties (i.e., racism, oppression, lack of resources; Burkard & Knox, 2004). According to Burkard and Knox (2004), counselors from a Western cultural background are more inclined to emphasize an internal locus of control for client problems. Thus, it may be beneficial if all training programs incorporated a broader focus to include multiculturalism, social justice, advocacy and leadership, instead of relying on a single class (e.g., Multicultural Counseling) to do this work. Perhaps an opportunity to assess personal biases and stereotypical attitudes, regardless of a person's cultural heritage, would allow for adjustments to the prevailing viewpoints which affect the attributions made by all counselors-in-training. Why school counselors-in-training in this study were more likely to choose a Compensatory model than their mental health counterparts is not readily clear. It may be possible that the focus of school counseling on young people brings with it a recognition that students' academic, personal, and career concerns are heavily influenced by external factors outside their control, e.g., inadequate or abusive parenting, lack of food and health care, obstacles at home to studying.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The primary limitation of this study was our small sample size of diverse counselors-in-training. Counselors-in-training of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, geographical regions, and genders may have given a significantly different response from the 86 graduate students who participated in the current study. In addition, because the overall RCQ scores for the sample population were higher than average, the results may have been dampened by a ceiling effect. The inadequate sample size, characteristics, and demographic variables make the conclusions of this study more tentative. However, we believe these findings may still be meaningfully relevant for counselor educators and clinical supervisors as they make decisions concerning their counselor-in-training programs.

Future studies could examine other variables which may contribute to attribution preferences. Clearly, cognitive complexity is only one of the variables with an impact on attribution scoring. Other factors associated with developmental variables contributing to a preferred attribution style include worldview schemas, life experiences, orientations, assumptions about the human condition, and stereotypical thinking. Accordingly, a replication of this study using more male participants and more persons of color would elevate detection of group differences in attribution styles.

### **Conclusion**

In determining "who's to blame," or how counselors-in-training make their causal attributions concerning client problems, this study has focused on cognitive complexity and its role in differentiating and organizing the numerous variables that affect the cause(s) and solution(s) of problems. Considering its impact on the counseling dynamic, the importance of developing cognitive complexity skills within counselors-in-training is paramount. It has been

demonstrated that carefully supervised training experiences improve this required, and acquired, skill (Duys & Hedstrom, 2000).

Given the results of this study, it appears the development of cognitive complexity may have an effect on a counselor's inclination toward certain attribution models, usually ones more valued within the counseling field. That is, counselors tend to value approaches which empower client choice and client responsibility for problems, apart from environmental issues. To facilitate the development of cognitive complexity, an early introduction in the course curriculum to microskills training, theoretically oriented courses and multicultural training would be helpful. An earlier practicum along with earlier internship training, yet offered only after sufficient course work has been completed, would help supervisors identify attribution styles favored by trainees. Students would thus become cognizant of unrecognized, personal variables and antecedents which could affect client evaluation. Also, in order to both heighten awareness of assessment issues and to challenge assumptions about the nature of client problems, the inclusion of attribution theory along with the required counseling theory course work would benefit counselors-in-training.

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# Exploring the Multicultural Competence of School Counselors

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Fallon K. Dodson

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The purpose of this study was to explore the self-perceived multicultural competence of school counselors. Forty-one school counselors out of the 510 school counselors who were current members of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) completed both survey instruments: a demographic survey and the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS). The results of the study indicated that one of eight demographic variables demonstrated significance in relation to multicultural competence. Recommendations for future research included using a larger, ethnically diverse sample; including all school counselors in the state of Virginia; developing a survey instrument that included more aspects of multiculturalism than race/ethnicity; and including a third assessment tool to examine the relationship between demographic variables, multicultural competence, and additional variables.

*Keywords:* multicultural competence; school counselors; multicultural counseling; counselor training

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As The United States continues to evolve into an increasingly diverse society, school counselors should have the necessary knowledge, skills, and awareness to provide multiculturally competent counseling. One of the major challenges school counselors face is uncertainty about whether they are sufficiently prepared to meet the needs of multiracial, multilingual, and multicultural students. Zalaquett, Foley, Tillotson, Dinsmore, and Hof (2008) discussed five factors that have contributed to an increased focus on multicultural competence in counselor education programs (CEPs). The first factor is the diversification of the population that CEP graduates will serve. The second factor is the recognition that CEPs have not historically met the needs of students from diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. The third factor is that accrediting agencies are requiring CEPs to infuse multicultural and social justice education initiatives into their programs. The accrediting agency for CEPs is the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP; CACREP, 2009). CACREP has outlined clear, extensive, and detailed requirements to ensure the cultural competence of students and faculty.

The fourth factor that has brought increased attention to the incorporation of more multicultural/social justice issues into their curriculum are the large number of contributions made by multicultural counseling, research, and educational scholars (Zalaquett, et al. 2008). The fifth and final factor that has led to an increased focus on multicultural counseling in CEPs is that the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2005) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2010) mandate counselors to be ethically responsible in addressing the diverse cultural needs of all students, families, teachers, and administrators.

In addition to increased attention on counselor education programs and ethical mandates, school counselors' multicultural competence has been linked to self-construals (Constantine &

Yeh, 2001), student advocacy (Lee, 2001), and multicultural training (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001). Other factors that may affect multicultural competence in school counselors include race, gender, years of experience, age, and work setting. To date, no study has addressed the school's racial and ethnic composition on the perceived multicultural competence of school counselors.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the self-perceived multicultural competence of school counselors in Virginia. If school counselors gain a deeper understanding of multicultural competence, school counselors can work more effectively with diverse students, teachers, administrators, families, and the community. Counselor education programs (CEPs) can use these findings to incorporate additional training in multiculturalism, advocacy, and social justice initiatives. Finally, school counselors can use these results to provide professional development on local, state, and national levels.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The research questions were tested by the following hypotheses:

1. H0: Race/ethnicity will not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.  
H1: School counselors who are from a minority/multiracial background will perceive themselves as more multiculturally competent than school counselors who are not.
2. H0: Gender will not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.  
H1: Female school counselors will perceive themselves as more multiculturally competent than male school counselors.
3. H0: Years of counseling experience will not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.  
H1: The more years of counseling experience a school counselor has, the more they will perceive themselves as multiculturally competent.
4. H0: Work setting (elementary, middle, high school) will not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.  
H1: High school counselors will perceive themselves as more multiculturally competent than middle and elementary school counselors.
5. H0: Racial/ethnic composition of the school will not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.  
H1: School counselors with racially/ethnically diverse schools will perceive themselves as more multiculturally competent.
6. H0: Taking a multicultural course will not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.  
H1: School counselors who have taken a multicultural course will perceive themselves as more multiculturally competent than school counselors who have not.
7. H0: Participating in multicultural training will not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.

- H1: School counselors who have participated in multicultural training will perceive themselves as more multiculturally competent than school counselors who have not.
8. H0: Graduating from a CACREP-accredited program will not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.
- H1: School counselors who graduated from a CACREP-accredited program will perceive themselves as more multiculturally competent than school counselors who have not.

## Method

### Population and Sampling

The population for this study was Virginia school counselors with a minimum of a Master's degree in school counseling practicing in elementary, middle, and high schools who were members of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Participants were solicited through the researcher's access to ASCA membership e-mail addresses. As of June, 2011 there were 510 practicing school counselors who were members of ASCA. An invitation to participate in the study, including complete details of the study, were sent to these Virginia school counselors through a mass email by the researcher.

### Instruments

Two instruments were used to gather data for the study: a demographic questionnaire and the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS).

**The demographic survey.** The demographic survey was developed by the researcher to gather the following information about participants: age, years of school counseling experience, gender, race/ethnicity, current work setting, racial/ethnic population of the school, highest degree earned, number of multicultural courses taken, and number of multicultural training sessions attended. The survey also asked school counselors if their school counseling program was CACREP-accredited.

**Multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness scale (MCKAS).** The Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS) is a 32-item self-rating scale that assesses multicultural counseling competency across two factors: Multicultural Knowledge ( $\alpha = .92$ ) and Multicultural Awareness ( $\alpha = .79$ ). There are 20 items for the Knowledge subscale and 12 items for the Awareness subscale. The scale uses a 7-point Likert scale to measure knowledge and awareness, with responses from not at all true (1) to totally true (7) (Hays, 2008; Ponterotto, Rieger, Barrett, & Sparks, 1994; Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Rieger, & Austin, 2002).

### Procedures

Permission to use the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS) was obtained from the developer (Joseph G. Ponterotto, personal communication, June 27, 2011). After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the study began. Ethical standards were adhered to in accordance to the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2005) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) ethical code.

The study also adhered to the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) ethical standards for research.

A cover letter was e-mailed to 510 Virginia school counselors. School counselors who elected to participate in the study clicked on a link that connected them to the Psychdata.com site. Upon entering the site, school counselors completed informed consent by providing an electronic signature. After completing informed consent, school counselors were asked to complete an electronic survey packet that included a demographic questionnaire and the MCKAS. School counselors were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and informed how to obtain a copy of the study results. Psychdata.com also included a comments section where counselors could provide qualitative feedback.

The surveys were e-mailed to school counselors in October, 2011. A reminder e-mail was sent to counselors two weeks after the initial mailing. Two additional reminders were sent to participants on October 31, 2011 and November 14, 2011. Data collection and analysis took place from October, 2011 to December, 2011.

Data from the demographic questionnaire and MCKAS were stored with Psychdata.com and forwarded to the researcher. Data was confidential and identifying information was not included about participants. Responses to the demographic survey and MCKAS were encrypted using 256-bit SSL, and the data remained encrypted until it was retrieved from the PsychData database. Psychdata.com had the only encryption key used to retrieve information. Research was stored in an isolated database on Psychdata.com and could only be accessed by the researcher with the correct username and password. Once all surveys are complete, the data was turned over to the researcher and deleted by Psychdata.com. The researcher stored data in an Excel spreadsheet then export data into SPSS for analysis.

## **Results**

### **Hypothesis 1 Findings**

Hypothesis 1: School counselors who are from a minority/multiracial background will perceive themselves as more multiculturally competent than school counselors who are not.

Of the 54 participants, 13 were missing data on the dependent variables and were removed from the data set. No univariate or multivariate outliers were identified. The resulting sample size for Hypothesis 1 was  $n = 31$  for Caucasian/Whites and  $n = 10$  for African Americans/ Blacks. The assumption of normality, linearity, and multicollinearity ( $r = .641$  and  $-.216$  for Caucasians and minorities, respectively) were met. Box's M test was significant indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was not met; however for a two group design, MANOVA is robust to violation of this assumption (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007). Levene's test for both dependent variables was not significant, indicating that the assumption of equality of error variance was met.

A one-way between groups MANOVA was used to test whether there was a significant difference in multicultural awareness and multicultural knowledge depending on ethnicity (Caucasian/White or African-American/Black). Results from the test indicated that there was not a significant difference between groups on the combined dependent variables ( $F(2, 38) = 3.255$ ,  $p = .05$ ; Wilk's Lambda = .854; partial eta squared = .146). Although the multivariate results were not statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level, the results were bordering

significance so the univariate tests were evaluated. The model summary for the univariate tests are provided in Table 1.

Table 1							
<i>Model Summary for Univariate Tests for Hypothesis 1</i>							
Source	DV	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Multicultural Awareness	3.305	1	3.305	6.655	0.014	0.146
	Multicultural Knowledge	1.049	1	1.049	1.286	0.264	0.032
Intercept	Multicultural Awareness	945.715	1	945.715	1904.475	0.000	0.980
	Multicultural Knowledge	817.188	1	817.188	1002.260	0.000	0.963
Race/Ethnicity	Multicultural Awareness	3.305	1	3.305	6.655	0.014	0.146
	Multicultural Knowledge	1.049	1	1.049	1.286	0.264	0.032
Error	Multicultural Awareness	19.366	39	0.497			
	Multicultural Knowledge	31.798	39	0.815			
Total	Multicultural Awareness	1383.536	41				
	Multicultural Knowledge	1181.694	41				
Corrected Total	Multicultural Awareness	22.671	40				
	Multicultural Knowledge	32.847	40				

When the dependent variables were considered separately, the univariate test for multicultural awareness was significant ( $F(1, 39) = 6.655, p < 0.05$ , partial eta squared = 0.146) but the univariate test for multicultural knowledge was not ( $F(1, 39) = 1.286, p = 0.264$ , partial eta squared = 0.032). Approximately 15% of the variance in multicultural awareness scores was explained by whether the participant reported being Caucasian/White or African American/Black. Individuals who reported being Caucasian/White had significantly higher multicultural awareness scores ( $M = 5.922$ ) than individuals who reported being African-American/Black ( $M = 5.261$ ). Based on these results, the null hypothesis that race/ethnicity will not have a significant effect on school self-perceived multicultural competence was rejected. Caucasian school counselors perceived themselves to be more multiculturally competent than African-American school counselors.

### **Hypotheses 2-8 Findings**

The null hypotheses for the remaining seven hypotheses were retained. There was no significant mean difference between groups in the combined dependent variables, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and the following independent variables: gender (Hypothesis 2;  $p = 0.126$ ), years of experience (Hypothesis 3;  $p = 0.725$ ), work setting (Hypothesis 4;  $p < 0.05$ ), racial/ethnic background of the school (Hypothesis 5;  $p = 0.703$ ), taking a multicultural course (Hypothesis 6;  $p < 0.05$ ), participating in multicultural training (Hypothesis 7;  $p = 0.091$ ), and graduating from a CACREP-accredited program (Hypothesis 8;  $p < 0.05$ ).



## Conclusion

**Research hypothesis 1: Race, ethnicity, and multicultural competence.** The first null hypothesis posited that race/ethnicity would not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence. Results indicated there was not a significant mean difference between groups in the combined dependent variables, multicultural knowledge and multicultural awareness, and ethnicity. Although the multivariate results were not significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level, the results bordered significance so univariate tests were reviewed, and multicultural knowledge and multicultural awareness were separated. This analysis showed that multicultural awareness alone showed statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), but multicultural knowledge did not show significance ( $p = 0.264$ ). By separating the variables of multicultural awareness and multicultural knowledge, approximately 15% of the variance in multicultural awareness scores was explained by whether the participant was Caucasian/White or African-American/Black. Individuals who identified as Caucasian/White reported higher levels of multicultural awareness ( $M = 5.922$ ) than their African-American/Black peers.

This finding is important to the field of school counseling because awareness allows counselors to recognize cultural similarities and differences between themselves and the students they serve. According to Pedersen (2000), "A well-defined awareness becomes essential for teaching, research, training, direct service, and consultation" (p. 18). Caucasian school counselors may have perceived themselves to be more culturally aware since they work with students that may be culturally different from them. The finding that knowledge was not significant for either ethnic group in the study is concerning. Although school counselors are aware that there are cultural similarities and differences in the school setting, it does not mean that school counselors have the knowledge to comprehend the worldview of culturally diverse students. The sample of counselors in the study may believe they have gained sufficient knowledge of culturally diverse populations through various student interactions. These findings may assist counselor educators who can use this information to include more knowledge and awareness building exercises in their courses. Counselor administrators could utilize these findings to advocate for more professional development opportunities.

This finding contradicts the earlier work of Holcomb-McCoy and Myers (1999) and Vinson and Neimeyer (2000), where minorities scored higher than Caucasians in multicultural awareness and knowledge. This finding affirms the earlier work of Merrill-Washington (2008), who found there was a significant relationship between multicultural awareness and ethnicity. However, the results of this study are contrary to the Merrill-Washington (2008) study, which showed a significant relationship between multicultural knowledge and ethnicity.

**Research questions 2-8.** For the remaining seven hypotheses, the null hypotheses were retained. The failure to find significant correlations for the variables of gender, work setting, and years of counseling experience aligns with the prior work of Holcomb-McCoy (2005), who had similar results using the MCCTS-R. Although Williams (2010) recommended including diverse schools as an aspect of school counselors' multicultural competence, this study did not find the racial and ethnic background of the school to be a significant variable; this suggests that additional research may be necessary to resolve this apparent contradiction in findings.

These findings can help inform theory by exploring additional aspects of Multicultural Counseling and Therapy (MCT). Since MCT is integrative, culturally centered, and uses multiple counseling interventions and strategies to empower clients (Sue, 1995), these findings could encourage future researchers to look at other aspects of MCT, including cultural identity

development between counselor and student. These findings can also inform practice by having counselors discuss their experience working with culturally diverse students as well as their comfort level in building relationships with culturally different students.

The results of this study have direct implications for counselor education programs and can be used to include multiculturalism throughout the counseling curricula. The failure to find significance across seven hypotheses suggests the possibility that participants lacked a sufficiently broad base of educational and experiential background to fully engage with the questions. This possibility relates to Holcomb-McCoy's (2005) observation that multiculturalism cannot be learned in one course; it must be included in all aspects of school counseling. Holcomb-McCoy (2005) believed counselors who were able to provide unbiased, culturally appropriate services for students and families could make a difference in student achievement, especially minority student achievement. Multiculturalism plays an important role in how the counseling profession connects with the students and families they serve.

The findings that taking a multicultural course and participating in multicultural training were not significant were contrary to Grothaus (2004) who found that the number of multicultural courses or training attended was significant for both the multicultural knowledge and multicultural awareness scales. The findings of this study do align with the findings of Holcomb-McCoy and Myers (1999), who found no statistically significant relationship between multicultural awareness and graduating from a CACREP-accredited program.

The failure to identify specific training as a significant factor in multicultural knowledge and multicultural awareness implies that there may be limited opportunities for this small sample of school counselors to receive regular multicultural competence training in local school divisions during professional development. There may also be limited training within professional organizations. The failure to identify CACREP-accredited curricula as a significant factor in multicultural knowledge and multicultural awareness also implies that there may be counseling programs that meet CACREP standards but are not CACREP-accredited. School counselors may graduate from online programs or accelerated programs that accommodate working adults. This information can be useful to practitioners seeking multicultural professional development within their school divisions and professional organizations.

## **Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. The major limitation to this study was the small sample size. The target sample size recommended for the study based on the population was 153 counselors, and this target was based upon a guideline that suggests most online surveys yield a 30% return rate (Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliot, 2002). The study had 41 school counselors participate in the study, providing an 8% return rate; the low return rate means that the power was low and the results may have been different if the response rate had been stronger.

In considering how the response rate might have been improved, the invitation to participate in a research study could have been worded in a different way to encourage school counselors to participate. The message could have been more encouraging, placing greater emphasis on the value of the study and the importance of their contribution. In addition, incentives might have further enhanced the response rate.

In addition to the generally low response rate, not all respondents answered all questions and some did not have experience with the variables under study. This further limited the ability to fully analyze the variables. For example although MANOVAs were used for seven of the

hypotheses, a Spearman rho correlation coefficient was used for Hypothesis 7 because only three school counselors had not participated in multicultural training. A large sample overall might have reduced such issues.

Another limitation to the study was the self-reporting nature of the surveys. Results indicated that Caucasian school counselors in Virginia perceived themselves to be more multiculturally aware than African-American school counselors. Caucasian school counselors may have overestimated their multicultural awareness to appear socially desirable. Constantine and Ladany (2000) mentioned that social desirability was a factor in multicultural counseling competence scales.

Another limitation to the study is the convenient sampling procedure. This study is limited to practicing school counselors who were also current members of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) in the state of Virginia. The study could have included school counselors from throughout the United States, counselor educators, counselor supervisors, counselor educators, counselor directors, and counselor coordinators. Generalizability was also limited in the study. The study was limited to school counselors who volunteered to participate and complete both survey instruments. The results are limited to this specific group of school counselors. These results could not be generalized to school counselors outside the state of Virginia.

## **Implications**

**Implications for multicultural counseling.** This study has implications for the practice and profession of multicultural counseling. While it is important to acknowledge the limitations imposed by the small response rate and weak power, the data do provide some initial insights and the qualitative comments shared by the participants lend additional insights into the perceptions of school counselors on this matter. One school counselor mentioned that the study reaffirmed their belief in the school counseling profession, similar to the commitment to the field finding in the Constantine, Melincoff, Barakett, Torino, & Warren (2004) study. Worldview, another factor in multicultural counseling, was also influenced in the study. Hays and McLeod (2010) defined worldview as, “individuals’ conceptualization of their relationship with the world” (p. 10). It plays a vital role in school counseling by helping school counselors understand how their students view the world in addition to how school counselors view the world. One school counselor mentioned that in order to provide cultural specific interventions to multicultural populations in school, the counselor sought culture-specific training to provide meaningful counseling services. This initiative on the part of the counselor suggests that this participant developed an appreciation for understanding the worldview of their client, and found value in learning more about the client’s culture. Such initiative is referenced in Pedersen (2000) as a desired outcome of multicultural competence training, and Ibrahim (1991) indicated that worldview is an important variable that makes knowledge and culture-specific interventions meaningful. In light of this evidence and supporting literature, it is recommended that counselor-educator programs consider the importance of multicultural counseling and the value that counselors feel in exploring and reflecting upon concepts like worldview and how such factors influence their practice.

The statistical significance of race and ethnicity means it is a salient concept for the school counseling profession. Race and ethnicity are one of the first multicultural factors that counselors notice with students, families, and colleagues. Additional aspects of race and

ethnicity include verbal and nonverbal cues and language. Race and ethnicity is a factor in whether an individual grew up in an individualistic or communal society. Stereotypes are also inherent in every racial and ethnic group. The implications for the nonsignificant data may be that multiculturalism is not fully integrated within counselor education programs, professional organizations, and school cultures. Training and continuing education for school counselors may need to change in light of the results by integrating multiculturalism in every school counseling course. This study and those that came before it indicate that school counselors may not establish a strong multicultural background during their degree programs (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999); the work environment demands such competence and so school counselors need professional development on multiculturalism within their school division as well as their professional organizations. Another way of supporting counselors who may not establish a strong base of multicultural competence during their degree programs could be to make multiculturalism a regular part of all professional literature rather than a periodic topic for a special edition. Counselors should be encouraged to directly challenge their views on race and ethnicity, and to consider how their views are shaped through their own experiences. With these considerations in place, they can be prepared to consider how race and ethnicity may be influencing their students. Once school counselors have a better understanding of multicultural counseling, school counselors can work with administrators to include multiculturalism in all aspects of school culture.

**Implications for multicultural counseling competence.** The three requirements for multicultural counseling competence are awareness, knowledge, and skills (Sue et al., 1992). Counselors completed the MCKAS and their total scores were used to assess their multicultural knowledge and awareness. Ponterotto et al. (2002) developed the MCKAS to assess two of the three requirements of multicultural counseling competence: multicultural knowledge and multicultural awareness. After completing the study, one school counselor mentioned that the points from the MCKAS were not points considered in daily work. The counselor believed it was important to frequently and regularly assess multicultural competence, and this belief in the literature was supported in the literature by Diller (2007), who held the perspective that cultural competence, viewed as a developmental process, involves continuous knowledge acquisition, advanced skill development, and ongoing self-evaluation; this cannot occur without conscious commitment. Though this comment came from a single participant, it is well worth considering the role, purpose, and benefits of ongoing assessment in this area. The implications of this respondent's comments were multicultural counseling competence must become a regular part of the counseling profession.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There are several recommendations for future research. One recommendation would include a larger, ethnically diverse sample as recommended by Holcomb-McCoy and Day-Vines (2004). An additional recommendation would be to include school counselors throughout the United States instead of limiting the study to current school counselors in Virginia who are members of ASCA.

Another recommendation would be to develop a survey instrument that includes more aspects of multiculturalism than race and ethnicity. Since multiculturalism is multidimensional, the assessment tool should include questions to assess how school counselors address socioeconomic status, gender, religion, sexual preference, and ability/disability. Questions

should be included to monitor social desirability and address how school counselors handle bias in their practice. One final recommendation would be to include a third assessment tool with the study to examine the relationship between demographic variables, multicultural competence, and other variables. Holcomb-McCoy (2005) recommended survey instruments that address racial identity attitudes or interracial comfort. Including qualitative questions in the survey could also add depth to multicultural competence (Grothaus, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). Qualitative questions should be included to assess skills, the third component of multicultural competence. Multicultural counseling competence will remain an important topic of discussion for school counselors as school become multicultural and multilingual.

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# Self-Efficacy of Beginning Counselors to Counsel Clients in Crisis

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Cheryl Sawyer, Michelle L. Peters, & Jana Willis

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Crisis situations are becoming more and more prevalent in our society today, and as a result, counselors should be aware of the overarching effects of various crisis situations and how they can affect their clients. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of preparedness on beginning counselors' levels of self-efficacy and their perceived abilities to handle crisis interventions. A purposeful sample of master's-level counseling students, enrolled in a Crises Intervention Preparation course for Mental Health Responders, were administered the Counselor's Self-Efficacy Scale to assess their levels of self-efficacy. Findings indicated that counseling students who studied theoretical strategies for approaching various crises, assessed the realities associated with their prospective client base, and tentatively planned flexible intervention models felt confident in their abilities to make effective decisions for supporting clients during crisis situations.

*Keywords:* beginning counselors; crisis intervention, preparedness, self-efficacy, crisis curriculum

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Crisis situations are becoming more and more prevalent in our society today, and as a result, counselors should be aware of the overarching effects of various crises situations and how they can affect their clients. According to Flannery and Everly (2000), "a crisis occurs when a stressful life event overwhelms an individual's ability to cope effectively in the face of a perceived challenge or threat" (p. 119). Crisis situations range from major unanticipated events, such as natural disasters, physical injury, or death, to emotional crises that come with transitional stages in one's life, such as divorce, children leaving the home, pregnancy, or family and school violence (Hoff, Hallisey, & Hoff, 2009).

Counselors in all settings report "crisis" to be a primary concern for the majority of their clients who report coming into contact with high-risk situations on a daily basis (Minton & Pease-Carter, 2011; Wachter, 2006). Over the past 20 years, violent acts in schools have more than doubled (McAdams & Keener, 2008), and over the past 45 years, suicide rates have increased by 60 % worldwide (World Health Organization, 2012). Rogers, Gueulette, Abbey-Hines, Carney, and Werth (2001) reported that 71% of counselors will work with a client who has attempted suicide and McAdams and Foster (2000) reported that 23% of counselors will experience a completion of a client suicide. There are also indications that there is an alarming "increase in the number of students seeking help for serious mental health problems at campus counseling centers" (Eiser, 2011, p. 18).

Crisis events, including the Sandy Hook School shooting, Aurora theater shooting, Virginia Tech massacre, Indian Ocean tsunami of 2005, the World Trade Center terrorist attack, and Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Ike, presented such unique challenges that traditional response plans proved to be inadequate to address them (Donahue & Tuohy, 2006; The White House,



2006; Webber & Mascari, 2010). Based on the very definition and nature of crisis, no single defined response can be prescribed for all situations (Dykeman, 2005). Even local crises with smaller impacts can require improvising of prepared response plans based on community cultural needs and norms. Research for improving responses to crises and disasters is evolving. For example, after Hurricane Katrina, the Mississippi Department of Mental Health developed a new model for providing responsive counseling services. The services offered a broader core of interventions for those impacted by the disaster (Jones, Allen, Norris, & Miller, 2009). The American Red Cross revised their regulations on who could be trained as disaster and crisis response workers (American Red Cross, 2008), and The Emergency Management Assistance Compact acknowledged the need for states to access response personnel from other states in emergency situations (Emergency Management Assistance Compact, 2009). In addition, various sources emphasize the need for pre-crisis preparation as a core element of any crisis response model (James, 2008; Jackson-Cherry & Erford, 2014; Granello, 2010). As a result, it may very well be imperative that counselors prepare to improvise, adapt, and make decisions grounded in both crisis response theory and the realities associated with responding to the immediate situation.

The 2009 Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Standards claim counselors need to understand both the impact of crises on people and the principles behind crisis intervention (CACREP, 2009). These standards are outlined for all clinical mental health counselors, marriage, couple and family counselors, school counselors, and student affairs and college counselors. The standards state that marriage, couple, and family therapists must be able to recognize problems such as suicide risk and domestic violence, while school counselors must both understand the school's emergency management system in times of crises as well as "be prepared to take on leadership roles in times of crisis" (Fein, Carlisle, & Issacson, 2008, p. 246). Clearly, counselors in all fields are expected to understand the principles surrounding crisis intervention and how to intervene in a crisis when necessary.

To address the escalating levels of crises in our society, counselors must be prepared to address the demands of the profession (Allen et al., 2002). For persons in crisis, community and school counselors often deliver the first line of defense and intervention; therefore, it is imperative that counselors feel prepared to perform crisis intervention with clients immediately upon graduation from a counseling graduate program (McAdams & Keener, 2008). Despite all of the overwhelming evidence that counselors need to be prepared to intervene in crisis situations, only 10.6% of school counselors reported taking a specific course involving school crisis interventions and 57% reported feeling inadequately or minimally prepared to handle crisis situations (Allen et al., 2002). Along with the reported feelings of inadequate preparation in the handling of crisis and disaster situations, there is concern for the lack of attention to crisis intervention in counselor training. Therefore, the overarching research question guiding this study was: Did counseling students' perceived sense of preparedness affect their self-efficacy to counsel clients in crisis following the completion of a crisis intervention preparation course?

### **Self-Efficacy and Preparedness**

Self-efficacy stems from the work of Albert Bandura and his Social Cognitive Theory where human behavior is defined as an interaction of personal factors, behavior, and the environment (Bandura 1977; Bandura 1986). Theoretically, it was believed that an individual's thoughts and actions impact the relationship of the individual and their behavior. Additionally,

an individual's relational interactions draw from his or her own beliefs and cognitive competencies that have been developed and affected by the influences of their environment. Consequently, the relationship between the individual, behavior, and environment is reciprocal with each element creating change within the others (Bandura 1977; Bandura 1986). Research studies conducted in a variety of preparation programs (i.e. teaching, counseling, nursing) have concluded that a relationship exists between an individual's perceptions of his or her preparedness and his or her self-efficacy (Hoy & Spero, 2005; Leigh, 2008; Paton, 2003; Uhernik, 2008). The more prepared someone feels the greater their self-efficacy. Research findings have also identified a relationship between counselor self-efficacy and performance (Larson & Daniels, 1998). The greater the counselor's self-efficacy, the greater his or her performance will be.

Bandura (1994) defined self-efficacy "as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (p. 71). Self-efficacy, one of the cognitive factors, is an individual's confidence that he or she can successfully accomplish a given task. Bandura maintains that self-efficacy beliefs are not merely "passive foretellers" of one's ability level (Bandura, 1997, p. 39), but they can also help govern and stimulate the motivation necessary to conduct the behavior. Bandura's research indicated that individuals who possessed high levels of self-confidence in their own abilities would approach difficult tasks as challenges rather than as obstacles and approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over the situation.

The relationship between self-efficacy, motivation, and performance is well documented in the literature and supports the theoretical notion that higher levels of preparedness could produce higher levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). According to social cognitive theory, grounded by impressive empirical research, human behavior is predictable and reciprocally influenced by both environmental and cognitive factors. For the purpose of this study, social cognitive theory served as the conceptual framework for understanding and predicting both individual and group behavior and identifying methods in which behavior can be modified or changed.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Participants consisted of a purposeful sample of master's level counseling students (n = 34) enrolled in a Crises Intervention Preparation course for Mental Health Responders that was required during their last semester in their masters Counseling program. A power analysis concluded that for a large effect size ( $d = .80$ ), a significance level of .05, and a power of .80, the minimum sample size needed was only 15; providing support for the adequacy of this study's sample size (CNET, 2012).

Participants ranged in age from 24 to 48 with the majority of them being women (85.3%). Approximately 35% were Caucasian, 29.4% were Latino/Hispanic, and 26.5% were African-American. School counselors comprised 67.6%, while the remaining 32.4% were licensed counselors. Additionally, 35.3% were bilingual speakers.

## **Crisis Intervention Curriculum**

The Crisis Intervention Preparation course for Mental Health Responders included a strong foundation in crisis and disaster response (CACREP, 2009; Webber & Mascari, 2009, 2010). Crisis intervention training textbooks were utilized to present researched concrete models for crisis intervention (Cavaiola & Colford, 2011; Jackson-Cherry & Erford, 2010; James, 2008; Webber & Mascari, 2010). The texts described proven strategies for addressing specific crises that emphasize ethical and multicultural components that must be observed during crisis response. Counseling students were introduced to a range of therapeutic tools and strategies that could be utilized based on the individual crisis situation, incorporated with new discoveries and trends, or infused with traditional practices and models (Webber & Mascari, 2010). The course examined cultural and racial biases and assumptions to train counseling students to avoid unintentional labeling, misinterpretations, and inappropriate or ineffective counseling approaches (James, 2008). Training included discussions related to more common crises including (but not limited to) child maltreatment, suicide, homicide, intimate partner/domestic violence, sexual assault, psychiatric crises such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), bereavement, school and workplace violence, natural disaster, and terrorism (Cavaiola & Colford, 2011; Jackson-Cherry & Erford, 2010; James, 2008; Webber & Mascari, 2009).

Reality preparation was included in the course instruction with suggestions that responders have a working knowledge of the unique service area as well as local cultural practices and attitudes (Allen et al., 2002). Training included a discussion of the realities associated with any crisis situation so that the counselor could facilitate a more contextual response. The course emphasized that a basic understanding of with whom and when individuals should intervene is often as important as how to intervene, as unwanted, untimely, micro-culturally inappropriate attempts to intervene can prove to have the opposite effect of their intent, and the safety of both the client and the counselor can be compromised. Course content acknowledged that when serving a highly agitated, potentially violent client population, crisis interveners need strong empathetic listening skills coupled with strategies for behavioral de-escalation and management of aggressive behavior (Brooks, 2010), such as those included in the Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Model (Crisis Prevention Institute, 1970).

After the counseling students extensively studied the theoretical strategies for approaching various crises and assessed the realities associated with their prospective client base, they tentatively planned intervention models that could potentially support their client base and the situation. These plans included some level of flexible adaption and invention on the part of the counselor as part of any pre-crisis preparation; alternate strategies that could be crafted within the context of traditional guidelines for intervention (Granello, 2010; Query, 2010).

The gathering and organizing of resources and materials that could prove to be helpful during the intervention were presented as essential elements in pre-preparation. The development of a counselor's crisis response box was introduced. Response materials were gathered and placed in a physical container that could be readily accessible for crisis response. For instance, a crisis box (Sawyer, 2005, 2006) that could prove to be supportive in the event of a death at an elementary school might include appropriate literature, creative materials for expressing grief, list of external support organizations, and personal items the counselor may need throughout the response (Sawyer & Coryat, 2009; Sawyer & Hammer, 2009). Although it was unrealistic and impractical to create response boxes for all types of crises, organizing boxes for identified crises most likely to occur seem to be both practical and empowering for the novice counselor (Sawyer

& Hammer, 2009). The crisis/disaster training curriculum also stressed the recognition of the need for counselor self-care, both during and after the crisis situation (Cavaiola & Colford, 2011; Jackson-Cherry & Erford, 2010; James, 2008; Pender & Prichard, 2009; Steele, 1999; Webber & Mascari, 2010; Yin & Kukor, 2012).

## **Instruments**

The Counselor's Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES) was developed to measure a person's perception of his or her capability to adequately counsel clients that have or are suffering from a crisis (e.g., divorce, death, suicide, rape). The CSES was derived from two sources. The first source of items came from Social Work Self-Efficacy (SWSE; Holden, Meenaghan, Anastas, & Metrey, 2002) scale. Twenty-four of the 52 items from SWSE were modified and included in the CSES. Modifications were made by converting the format of each item from a question into a statement and renaming the subscales to reflect counselors. Then, for 13 of the items used, wording was altered to include the word "crises" and/or simplified. For example, "define the client's problems in specific terms?" was modified to read as "Define the client's crises related problems in specific diagnostic terms." The remaining five items came from the review of the literature and expertise of licensed counseling practitioners.

The instrument was subjected to two rounds of validation to ensure that the questionnaire was measuring what it was intended to measure. The questionnaire was submitted to an expert panel of 10 professors teaching in graduate counseling programs at various higher education institutions to assess its content and face validity. Members of the expert panel were requested to comment on the content of the items, ordering and wording of the items, and whether items should be added and/or deleted from the survey. After the survey was revised based on their comments for improvements, a university Program Coordinator of Counseling and a measurement expert reviewed the validity of the questionnaire once more before administration.

The final version of the CSES consisted of 42-items divided into four subscales: (a) Crises Situations (13-items), (b) Basic Counseling Skills (15-items), (c) Therapeutic Response to Crisis and Post-Crisis (8-items), and (d) Unconditional Positive Regard (6-items). Participants were asked to rank their behavior on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = No Confidence at All; 5 = Complete Confidence) for each of the subscales. Composite scores can range from 0 to 210; the larger the composite score the more self-efficacious a person perceives him or herself. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the CSES were found to be .96 for the entire instrument, .96 for Basic Counseling Skills, .97 for Therapeutic Response to Crisis and Post-Crisis, and .98 for Unconditional Positive Regard subscales.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

On the first night of the Crises Intervention course, participants were solicited to complete the CSES. This process was repeated during the final class meeting. For both sets of surveys, an identifier was assigned to each survey to assure confidentiality. Along with the survey, each participant was provided with a cover letter stating the purpose of the study, acknowledging that participation in the study was voluntary, and that the participant identity would remain completely anonymous.

## Data Analysis

The data was imported into SPSS 20 from an Excel document for further analysis. Percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated to assess the pre- and post-differences in participant responses in regards to counseling a client experiencing a crisis. Two-tailed paired t-tests were calculated to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between pre- and post-self-efficacy in regards to providing basic counseling skills, therapeutic response to crisis and post-crisis, and unconditional positive regard to clients experiencing a crises. Cohen's d and the coefficient of determination (r<sup>2</sup>) were calculated to assess effect size, while Cronbach's alphas were calculated to assess the reliability of the instrument.

## Results

### Crisis Situations

Participants were asked to rank pre- and post-self-efficacy concerning their perceived ability to adequately counsel clients that have or are suffering from crises, such as child abuse, death, suicide, etc. Tables 1 and 2 display the results of participants' responses. All 13 of the crises situations were covered within the curriculum of the Crises Intervention course. Prior to taking this course, the majority of the participants felt that they possessed "A Little" to a "Fair Amount of Confidence". At the completion of the semester, the majority of the participants reported that they felt "Very Much Confident" in all of the crises situations presented in the course. The smallest percent increase in self-efficacy was reported with counseling terrorism victims (19.3%), while the largest percent increase was found to be in counseling clients of a natural disaster (47.8%). These findings indicate that the knowledge and training received in the Crises Intervention course has increased participants' sense of preparedness, and thus their self-efficacy in providing clients with adequate counseling services during times of a crisis.

Crises Situations	No Confidence at All	A Little Confidence	A Fair Amount of Confidence	Much Confidence	Very Much Confident	Complete Confidence
1. Abandonment	2.9	20.6	<b>35.3</b>	17.6	20.6	2.9
2. Child Abuse	2.9	<b>29.4</b>	<b>29.4</b>	17.6	11.8	8.8
3. Death	8.8	<b>32.4</b>	20.6	20.6	8.8	8.8
4. Domestic Violence	8.8	17.6	<b>38.2</b>	11.8	14.7	8.8
5. Homelessness	8.8	23.5	<b>32.4</b>	14.7	5.9	14.7
6. Murder	20.6	<b>44.1</b>	17.6	5.9	8.8	2.9
7. Kidnapping	20.6	<b>35.3</b>	29.4	8.8	2.9	2.9
8. Natural Disaster	2.9	14.7	<b>32.4</b>	23.5	14.7	11.8
9. School or Workplace Violence	6.1	15.2	<b>36.4</b>	15.2	12.1	15.2
10. Sexual Assault	11.8	<b>41.2</b>	17.6	8.8	14.7	5.9
11. Self-Mutilation	5.9	26.5	<b>38.2</b>	8.8	14.7	5.9
12. Suicide	14.7	<b>38.2</b>	29.4	2.9	11.8	2.9
13. Terrorism	14.7	<b>38.2</b>	26.5	8.8	8.8	2.9

Table 2  
*Post-Scores – Crises Situations (%)*

Crises Situations	No Confidence at All	A Little Confidence	A Fair Amount of Confidence	Much Confidence	Very Much Confident	Complete Confidence
1. Abandonment	0.0	3.0	12.1	30.3	<b>45.5</b>	9.1
2. Child Abuse	0.0	0.0	15.2	27.3	<b>45.5</b>	12.1
3. Death	0.0	6.1	3.0	18.2	<b>48.5</b>	24.2
4. Domestic Violence	0.0	0.0	15.6	28.1	<b>43.8</b>	12.5
5. Homelessness	0.0	3.0	12.1	33.3	<b>42.4</b>	9.1
6. Murder	3.0	18.2	24.2	21.2	<b>30.3</b>	3.0
7. Kidnapping	0.0	12.5	21.9	25.0	<b>37.5</b>	3.1
8. Natural Disaster	0.0	3.1	12.5	0.0	<b>62.5</b>	21.9
9. School or Workplace Violence	0.0	3.0	9.1	21.2	<b>45.5</b>	21.2
10. Sexual Assault	0.0	3.0	24.2	24.2	<b>42.4</b>	6.1
11. Self-Mutilation	0.0	0.0	18.2	27.3	<b>45.4</b>	9.1
12. Suicide	0.0	6.1	30.3	18.2	<b>36.4</b>	9.1
13. Terrorism	3.1	25.0	<b>28.1</b>	12.5	<b>28.1</b>	3.1

### Basic Counseling Skills

The Basic Counseling Skills subscale asked participants to rank their self-efficacy on topics, such as effectively intervening with a client and/or family in crisis and collaborating with clients in crisis in setting intervention goals. Participants reported mean increases in self-efficacy greater than 1.00 in 14 out of the 15 items in this subscale. Mean increases in self-efficacy ranged from .88 to 1.82. Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics for this subscale.

To assess whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the pre- and post self-efficacy of the basic counseling skills subscale, a two-tailed paired t-test was conducted. Findings suggested that there was a statistically significant mean difference between the pre- and post self-efficacy scores,  $t(33) = -7.117$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.77$  (large effect size),  $r^2 = .662$ . The Crises Intervention course had a large effect on the self-efficacy of the counseling students and 66.2% of the variance in those scores is attributable to the course.

Table 3  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Basic Counseling Skills Items*

Basic Counseling Skills	Mean Pre Self-Efficacy	Standard Deviation Pre Self-Efficacy	Mean Post Self-Efficacy	Standard Deviation Post Self-Efficacy	Mean Difference
1. Initiate and sustain empathetic, culturally sensitive, non-judgmental, disciplined relationships with clients in crisis.	4.24	1.23	5.56	.66	1.32
2. Utilize knowledge to plan for intervention for client in crisis.	3.50	1.11	5.21	.77	1.71
3. Intervene effectively with individuals in crisis.	3.56	1.13	5.24	.70	1.68
4. Intervene effectively with families in crisis.	3.29	1.24	5.09	.83	1.80
5. Effectively debrief with groups impacted by crisis.	3.18	1.29	5.00	.89	1.82
6. Maintain self-awareness in practice, recognizing your own personal values and biases, and preventing or resolving their intrusion into practice.	3.94	1.28	5.38	.78	1.44
7. Critically evaluate your own practice, seeking guidance appropriately and pursuing ongoing professional development.	4.22	1.36	5.41	.74	1.19
8. Practice in accordance with the ethics and values of the profession.	4.65	1.01	5.53	.56	.88

## Therapeutic Response to Crisis and Post-Crisis

The Therapeutic Response to Crisis and Post-Crisis subscale asked participants to rank their self-efficacy on topics such as helping clients explore specific skills to deal with certain problems and guiding the clients in managing their own problem behaviors. Participants reported mean increases in self-efficacy greater than 1.00 for each of the eight items in this subscale. Mean increases in self-efficacy ranged from 1.00 to 1.47. Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics for this subscale.

To assess whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the pre- and post self-efficacy of the therapeutic response to crisis and post-crisis subscale, a two-tailed paired t-test was conducted. Findings indicated that there was a statistically significant mean difference between the pre- and post self-efficacy scores,  $t(33) = -5.915$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.47$  (large effect size),  $r^2 = .593$ . The Crises Intervention course had a large effect on the self-efficacy of the counseling students and 59.3% of the variance in those scores is attributable to the course.

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for the Therapeutic Response to Crisis and Post-Crisis Items*

Therapeutic Response to Crisis and Post-Crisis	Mean Pre Self-Efficacy	Standard Deviation Pre Self-Efficacy	Mean Post Self-Efficacy	Standard Deviation Post Self-Efficacy	Mean Difference
1. Help clients to reduce irrational ways of thinking that contribute to their problems.	3.88	1.01	5.00	.78	1.12
2. Help clients explore specific skills to deal with certain problems.	3.94	1.13	5.12	.73	1.18
3. Help clients to better understand how the consequences of their behavior affect their problems.	4.12	1.21	5.24	.70	1.12
4. Help clients explore how to manage difficult or ambiguous feelings.	3.91	1.08	5.26	.68	1.35
5. Demonstrate to clients how to express their thoughts and feelings more effectively to others.	4.00	1.04	5.29	.72	1.29
6. Help clients to practice their new problem-solving skills outside of treatment visits.	3.85	1.31	5.32	.68	1.47
7. Guide clients in managing their own problem behaviors.	4.03	1.03	5.24	.70	1.21
8. Help clients set limits for others' dysfunctional or intrusive behaviors.	4.06	1.13	5.06	.92	1.00

## Unconditional Positive Regard

The Unconditional Positive Regard subscale asked the participants to rank their self-efficacy on topics, such as utilizing reflection to help clients feel understood and/or validated and providing emotional support and a safe holding environment for clients. Participants reported mean increases in self-efficacy greater than 1 for all six of the items in the subscale. Mean increases in self-efficacy ranged from 1 to 1.18. Table 5 displays the descriptive statistics for this subscale.

To assess whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the pre- and post self-efficacy of the unconditional positive regard subscale, a two-tailed paired t-test was conducted. Findings indicated that there was a statistically significant mean difference between the pre- and post- self-efficacy scores,  $t(33) = -4.996$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.24$  (large effect size),  $r^2 = .528$ . The Crises Intervention course had a large effect on the self-efficacy of the counseling students and 52.8% of the variance in those scores is attributable to the course.

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics for the Unconditional Positive Regard Items*

Unconditional Positive Regard	Mean Pre Self-Efficacy	Standard Deviation Pre Self-Efficacy	Mean Post Self-Efficacy	Standard Deviation Post Self-Efficacy	Mean Difference
1. Utilize reflection to help clients feel understood.	4.29	1.14	5.29	.91	1.00
2. Utilize reflection to help clients feel validated.	4.29	1.22	5.44	.79	1.15
3. Employ empathy to help clients feel that they can trust you.	4.50	1.24	5.68	.53	1.18
4. Provide emotional support and safe holding environment for clients.	4.50	1.18	5.56	.56	1.06
5. Help clients feel like they are safe to share emotions with you.	4.53	1.16	5.65	.54	1.12
6. Validate client successes to increase their self-confidence.	4.47	1.16	5.65	.54	1.18

## Preparedness to Counsel Crises Clients

At the beginning and completion of the semester the participants were asked to provide open-ended responses to the following qualitative question: “How do you feel about your capabilities to successfully support a client in crises?” Before the course started, participants felt that they either did not possess the required knowledge and/or skills (38.9%) necessary to be an effective counselor for a client in a crisis situation or they believed that they possessed enough confidence because of the knowledge acquired in the previous two and a half years in the master’s counseling program (38.9%), personal experiences in their own lives and/or lives of family/friends (16.7%), or already had professional experience in the counseling field (5.6%). At the completion of the semester, 100.0% of the participants reported having the confidence necessary to counsel a client who has experienced a crisis situation due to the knowledge and training they received during the Crises Intervention course. Not surprising, the post-responses reflected much more confident counseling students, even for those who were self-efficacious in their abilities from the beginning of the semester.



## Discussion

The results of this study suggested that a relationship exists between having a sense of preparedness and the perceived self-efficacy of beginning counselors regarding their ability to effectively handle crises interventions. These findings are aligned with the previous research (CACREP, 2009; Cavaiola & Colford, 2011; Granello, 2010; Jackson-Cherry & Erford, 2014; Query, 2010; Webber & Mascari, 2009, 2010), which support the need for beginning counselors to participate in designated, organized coursework in crisis intervention theory and practice. Throughout the university's counseling program, all counseling students were introduced to a wide range of issues that could potentially become crises situations. The crisis intervention course was offered at the end of the 48-hour program, concurrent with the last semester of internship. Data collected prior to the beginning of the course indicated counseling students felt they had some level of proficiency in addressing crises situations.

However, after the counseling students were exposed to concrete theoretical models, opportunities for extensive discussion and role play, encouragement to use flexibility and informed judgment in selecting appropriate strategies to address culturally and community specific crises, and time devoted to discuss the "Hows" and "What Ifs" of crisis intervention, the counseling students were significantly more confident in their ability to support clients during times of crisis. The pre/post instruments administered in this study provided strong evidence that the crises intervention course significantly impacted the confidence levels of the counselors who participated in the course.

One implication of these findings for counselor preparation is that self-efficacy may be a critical variable in the perceived sense of preparedness felt by beginning counselors faced with crises situations. Coursework and professional development efforts should make every effort to embed opportunities for experiences that will improve the confidence levels of their participants. Better preparation will ensure that beginning counselors enter their client environments secure in their beliefs that they are able to handle crises situations. Future research should examine the impact of the crisis curriculum on not only the perceived preparedness of the beginning counselors, but also on their own personal experiences as they encounter clients during crisis situations in the field. Additional studies that explore other factors that could influence the perceived sense of preparedness and self-efficacy of beginning counselors could positively impact the design and development of effective counselor training program and professional development initiatives.

## Conclusion

The term "crisis" can be defined in conjunction using the Chinese symbols for danger and opportunity, but can also be defined using the Greek word *kinetin* meaning "to decide" (Cavaiola & Colford, 2011). Counselors must be prepared to address the demands of the profession (Allen et al., 2002) by making decisions about how to best support their clients. Although most crises such as domestic violence, divorce, sudden death, rape, or assault could be described as universal across cultures (Dykeman, 2005), even local crises can require counselors to improvise and make decisions about prepared response plans based on the nature of the crisis as well as the community's needs and norms.. Counseling students who studied a variety of theoretical strategies for approaching various crises, assessed the realities associated with their prospective client base, and tentatively planned flexible intervention models that could potentially best

support their client base felt confident in their abilities to make effective decisions and take appropriate steps to support clients during crisis situations. The content presented in this crisis training curriculum enhanced the student's self-efficacy related to appropriately responding to client needs during crisis situations.

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# School Counseling Supervision in Challenging Times: The CAFE Supervisor Model

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Melissa S. Ockerman, Erin C. M. Mason, & Stuart F. Chen-Hayes

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Given the increased need for school counselors to proactively address the pervasive achievement, opportunity, and attainment gaps, school counselor preparation should move from traditional supervision models to one with an equitable K-12 student outcomes focus. The Change Agent for Equity (CAFE) model presented can help school counselors-in-training foster a change agent identity, aimed at helping all K-12 students succeed and reach their postsecondary dreams. The CAFE model and the supervisor's identity and supervision practices within the model are described. Additionally, internship assignments and rubrics are outlined and supervisory recommendations and implications are discussed.

*Keywords:* school counseling supervision, counselors-in-training, counselor education, CAFE Model

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Given the recent movements within the school counseling profession for a more clinical focus, supervision of clinical skills should be grounded in this new professional paradigm, namely to transform the profession and develop change agents. This becomes important during practicum and internship, an influential and valuable part of pre-service school counselor education (Ockerman & Mason, 2012; Studer & Diambra, 2010). The CAFE model of school counseling supervision was developed by the authors and is presented as a vehicle to help bridge the gap between theoretical discourse and the daily, real-world practice of those supervising professional school counselors in training in university settings. With intentional and equity-focused training and supervision, professional school counselors can promote K-12 student achievement, thus creating a brighter, more promising future for students and the counseling profession.

## **Influential School Counseling Reform Movements**

School counselors have historically responded to social, economic, educational and political reforms (Baker & Gerler, 2008; Herr, 2002; Paisley & Borders, 1995; Schimmel, 2008) and in recent years the profession has undergone significant transformations. The American School Counseling Association's (ASCA) National Standards (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) and National Model (ASCA, 2005), and the ASCA Ethical Code for School Counselors' two most recent revisions (ASCA, 2004, 2010) made significant strides in establishing clear expectations around school counseling standards (academic, career, and personal/social) and shifted the focus from school counseling duties to school counselor outcomes. The ASCA Code of Ethics explicitly states that school counselors work to help close achievement, opportunity, and

attainment gaps (ASCA, 2010). Similarly, the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI), in partnership with the Education Trust, re-envisioned the role of the school counselor as one who must possess mastery of skills in leadership, advocacy, teaming and collaboration, counseling and coordination, and using and assessing data to promote educational equity and access for all students (Sears, 1999). As a result, counselor education programs implementing TSCI-focused training were redesigned their admissions processes, curricula, professional development and field experiences (see House & Sears, 2002; Martin, 2002; Paisley & Hayes, 2003). These newly transformed training programs were dedicated to promoting social justice and systemic change in educational systems that had historically marginalized and under-served student populations.

Predating ACA and ASCA, the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), formed in 1936, continues today to be a leader in college admissions, access, and readiness counseling, providing a wealth of tools for college access and closing opportunity and attainment gaps. Bolstering this position, the College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) asserted that professional school counselors must ensure that all students, particularly students from underrepresented populations, are college and career ready (NOSCA, 2010). Recently, NOSCA (2010) set forth eight components of college and career readiness counseling designed to help professional school counselors "build aspirations and social capital, offer enriching activities, foster rigorous academic preparation, encourage early college planning, and guide students and families through the college admission and financial aid processes" (p. 3). The work of NACAC and NOSCA underscore the timely need for school counselors to be especially vocal about their capacity to provide college and career planning services to students, and about the need for increased training in this area at the pre-service level.

### **The Need for Changes to Supervision**

Given these transformations within the profession and the call to better prepare young people for their future, efforts related to transforming the university supervision of professional school counselors-in-training are merited. While it is purported that the clinical experience (i.e. practicum and internship) is an influential and valuable part of pre-service professional school counselor training (Ockerman & Mason, 2012; Studer & Diambra, 2010), school counseling programs are in need of consistency and consensus around how these vital learning experiences are conducted and supervised. A review of the school counseling supervision literature revealed two prevalent and related themes: (1) inconsistent supervisory expectations, tasks and responsibilities and (2) little or no specific training and development for professionals supervising school counselors-in-training (Blakely, Underwood & Rehfuss, 2009; Studer, 2006). Despite the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) requirements for supervision, the profession continues to have varying supervision standards across school counselor preparation programs (Blakely, Underwood & Rehfuss, 2009; Studer, 2005). For example, there are no CACREP standards specific to school counseling site visits. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the individual university program to define what occurs in a site visit. Similarly, while CACREP (2009) requires all Counselor Education programs to provide specific training for site supervisors, there is no guidance regarding the specific supervision of school counseling students in the university setting, or the addressing of the unique supervisory issues affecting K-12 settings. The supervision of clinical experiences in school counseling, and the training of university supervisors to oversee school counseling

students remain inexplicit and inadequate in many training programs (Blakely, Underwood & Rehfuss, 2009; Studer, 2006).

Henderson's (1994) administrative supervision counseling work was a helpful addition to the school counseling literature, as were developmental/clinical counselor supervision models such as the Integrated Developmental Model (e.g., Luke & Bernard, 2006; Luke, Ellis, & Bernard, 2011; Stoltenberg & McNeil, 2009;). While these contributions provide evidence-based frameworks for supervision widely used in university counseling training programs (Studer, 2006), they do not explicitly reflect educational reform movements transforming the school counseling profession including college and career readiness for all students designed to close achievement, opportunity, and attainment gaps (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2011).

Furthermore, the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy's (NOSCA) *Counseling at the Crossroads* Report (2011) describes the need for school counselors to provide more college access and planning services to students. The study, which surveyed over 5300 middle and high school counselors, the largest survey ever conducted with this population, concluded "school counselors are highly valuable professionals in the educational system, but they are also among the least strategically deployed" (p. 4). The report discussed the need for school counselors to respond to the decreasing graduation and college-going rates throughout the nation. Specifically, the researchers highlighted school counselors' desire to participate in educational reform (namely to better prepare students for post-secondary options), but noted only 35% of those surveyed believed they had the proper support and resources to make it happen. In fact, almost one third (28%) of respondents reported that their graduate level training did not prepare them well for their role as school counselors, and just over half (56%) reported feeling "somewhat" well trained.

Given the importance of closing multiple and complex gaps (e.g., achievement, attainment, opportunity, etc.) in the field of education, the primary responsibility of school counselors has refocused to promoting change toward equity every student, especially as it pertains to graduation and college going rates (ASCA, 2010; Chen-Hayes, 2007; Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2011; NOSCA, 2011). The authors, therefore, developed an evolved model of professional school counselor identity as it has grown out of education reform and professional landmarks (e.g., The Transforming School Counseling Initiative, The ASCA National Model). This Change Agent for Equity (CAFE) Model for School Counselors (Mason, Ockerman & Chen-Hayes, 2012), puts a change-agent-for equity (CAFE) identity at the center of professional school counseling practice and program delivery (see Figure 1). The CAFE school counselor is drawn to problems of social justice and seeks out inequities and imbalances on small and large scales, and moves to change them. Therefore, congruent university supervision practices, which have also evolved from educational and professional reform movements and mirror what school counselors must do themselves in the field, are necessary (Wood & Rayle, 2006).

In order to transform school counselor supervision, university supervisors should actively model for their school counselor supervisees the types of equity-focused actions needed to take in order to close achievement gaps. Though specific to leadership skills, Dr. Pam Paisley in McMahon, Mason and Paisley (2009), offers this poignant comment regarding her own experience, which clearly illustrates this notion:

I came to understand that I could not prepare school counselors to be educational leaders if I was not willing to risk being one. I could not and still cannot talk about being an advocate, a



leader, or a team builder in a classroom and not demonstrate behaving in those ways in my community. Leadership requires me to live what I am requiring of students (p. 118).

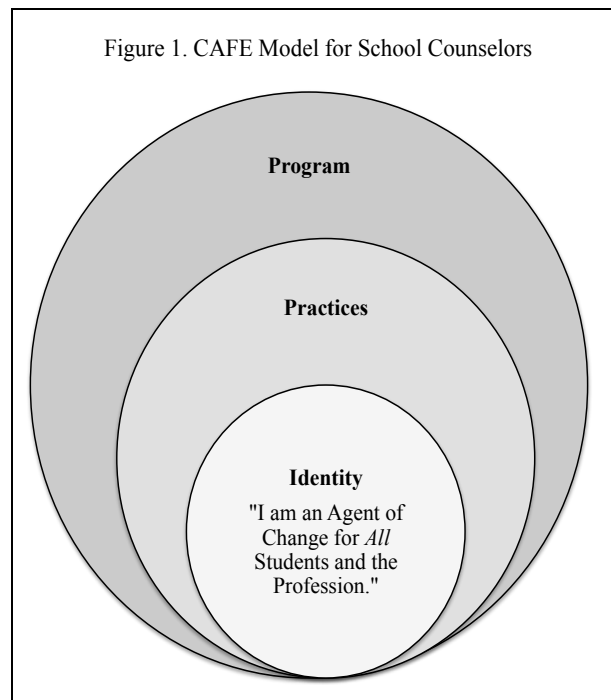
### **The Change-Agent-For-Equity (CAFE) Model for Supervisors at the University Level**

As noted, current university supervision models should be transformed at pace with the profession, moving beyond ensuring technical competence and academic knowledge. Shifting the foundation of university supervision from a role and skill focus to a professional identity focus would allow the supervisor's actions to permeate from within rather than to be reactive to external circumstances. Indeed, the new university supervision model encompass a way of being; that the university supervisor personify what it means to be an agent of change and use this professional identity as the underlying force which guides and directs all supervisory efforts.

We suggest an updated model of university-based school counselor supervisor identity and practice that follows the professional milestones of the field of School Counseling. In congruence with the CAFE Model for School Counselors (Mason, Ockerman, & Chen-Hayes, 2012), the CAFE supervision model also places the change-agent-for-equity (CAFE) identity of the supervisor at the center of supervisory practices and supervision. The CAFE model presented here supposes, for the university supervisor, essential professional practices beyond the basic scope of supervision. Crucial to this model is the supervisor's identity as an agent of change for the graduate students they supervise, for those K-12 students their supervisees serve, as well as for the school counseling profession at large. Specifically, this model refers to supervisors at the university level but could be conceptually extrapolated to site supervisors as well.

### **The CAFE Supervisor's Identity**

The authors suggest there is an inherent correspondence between the supervisor's change agent identity, the supervisor's day-to-day practices, and the process of supervision itself, in this Change Agent for Equity (CAFE) model. A helpful point of reference for those supervising school counseling students is the CAFE Model for School Counselors (Mason, Ockerman & Chen-Hayes, 2012). This coordinating model essentially flips the ASCA Model inside out by putting the school counselor's identity as systemic change agent at the center (see Figure 1). With a clear identity established, the connected practices of advocacy, leadership and collaboration then result in an equity-focused, data-driven, comprehensive school counseling program. The CAFE Model for School Counselors emphasizes the identity of the school counselor as a foundational element of school counseling practice. Supervisors can use the CAFE Model



as a tool for helping pre-service counselors round themselves in a strong equity and change-oriented professional identity.

Basic to the CAFE supervisor's identity is a proactive stance as stated by the belief; "I am an agent of change for all students and the profession" (Figure 2). This identity of change agent, within the supervisor, is unambiguous, overtly expressed and clearly recognized by supervisees.

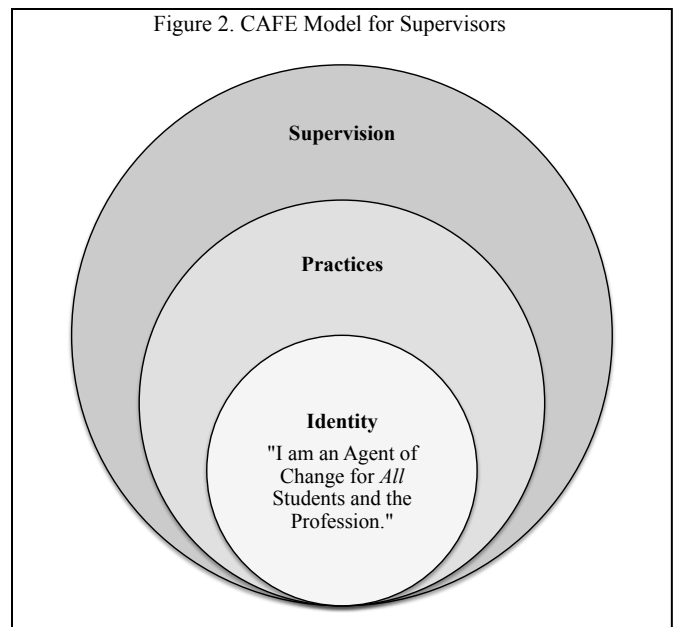
Owning and modeling the change agent identity may afford supervisors a clear origin and is a demonstration of professional strength for supervisees. The author's suspect that supervisors who epitomize this identity will inherently practice ethical decision-making, multicultural competence, advocacy, leadership, collaboration and data-driven strategies because their change agent identity compels them to such practices. We also suspect that supervisors with a change agent identity will provide supervision that is intentional and meaningful for supervisees because it will be an expression of their professional identity. Finally, the authors believe that a supervisor with a change agent identity aims to extend his or her influence to the graduate program, and to the School Counseling profession itself. The CAFE supervisor embraces a systemic view, one that recognizes multiple levels of impending influence as a supervisor with experience and/or as a university academic. Exhibiting professional flexibility and personal reflection during difficult situations; the change agent becomes especially critical when shepherding supervisees through site-based obstacles. In concert, the work of the supervisor through supervision, and the outcomes of that work, should manifest and reinforce the identity as change agent within the supervisees and thus spur their own actions towards change.

The supervisor with a CAFE identity promotes change beyond supervision. With an aspiration to assist supervisees in creating change, the CAFE supervisor views his or her role as significant on many levels, including within supervision and within the profession itself. The CAFE supervisor believes that his or her professional function is to contribute to change on a range of levels in dynamic ways. The authors believe re-conceptualizing how supervisors view themselves and their professional identity is fundamental to creating a supervisory relationship based upon developing change agents and the next generation of professional school counselors.

### **The CAFE Supervisor's Practices**

As it is expressed in their practice and supervision itself, supervisors with a change agent identity will have a particular way of operating. The CAFE supervisor utilizes the ability to create change within the supervision process in a variety of ways. For example, supervisors encourage the growth of an individual supervisee, challenge a supervision group, and contribute to the curricular elements of supervision in a counseling program. The CAFE supervisor takes a systemic perspective and follows a similar course of action no matter the audience or the targeted level for change.

Figure 2. CAFE Model for Supervisors



At the supervisee level, the CAFE supervisor may advocate for more opportunities for an intern to participate in classroom guidance at their site or to provide new classroom guidance on college and career readiness topics. At the graduate program level the CAFE supervisor may practice leadership by presenting new or innovative ideas for colleagues related to equity-focused practices in school counseling student supervision. At the state level the CAFE supervisor may serve on or chair a committee within the state school counseling organization to represent school counseling students, lobby for legislation related to school counseling positions or serve as a consultant to local school counselors who aim to increase their delivery of college access and career planning services. At the national level the CAFE supervisor may attend or present at national conferences, showcase effective activities and assignments for supervision that increase students' practice with college and career planning, or publish material for supervisors.

The CAFE supervisor embodies the ASCA National Model functions of leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic naturally and moves fluidly between them, personally and professionally identifies with tenets of change espoused by the profession and intuitively reflects this understanding during supervision.

### **The CAFE Supervisor's Supervision**

Elemental to the CAFE supervisor's practices is the parallel between the supervisor's own identity as a change agent and the development of supervisees' professional identities as change agents; the CAFE supervisor is therefore a natural role model for the emerging CAFE school counselor. Supervision is an intentional process of assisting supervisees in developing their professional identities through meaningful and practical activities that foster independence and emphasize higher order thinking via Bloom's Taxonomy, including analysis and evaluation of information, and creation of unique material (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), beyond the basic presentation of cases and the documenting of hours spent at the internship site.

Part of being a CAFE supervisor means staying current with related research, education reform initiatives and challenges of school counselors in practice. Rather than being solely driven by state requirements or program demands, the CAFE supervisor is driven by the genuine, internal identity as change agent, including the knowledge, abilities, skills and supervision practices committed to helping supervisees close achievement, opportunity and attainment gaps for all K-12 students.

### **Sample CAFE Assignments, Rubrics, and Recommendations**

Creating practicum and internship-based assignments/experiences that foster equitable outcomes plays an integral part in the school and college counseling clinical and administrative experience. It is the authors' belief that the development of a change agent professional identity and skill set should happen within and outside of the classroom in order to fully take shape. Thus, the authors offer the following key areas and ideas for assignments within practicum and internship classes to assess students' learning and skill sets and to be used in tandem with the CAFE model:

1. **Being visible.** Practicum and internship students should understand that being visible to stakeholders (i.e. family members of students, teachers, administrators) is a key first step to establishing oneself as an integral part of the school and an agent of change. As such, appropriate assignments may have students attend events during or before/after school hours (e.g.,

parent/teacher conferences, financial aid night, honors programs, etc.) to promote the school counseling program. This may involve creating posters, fliers, brochures, short presentations or letters to disseminate to stakeholders regarding who they are, the hours they will be at their school sites, their primary responsibilities and, most importantly, what it means to be a transformed professional school counselor. Creating opportunities to be seen as a leader, advocate and valuable member of the school community is primary to the effectiveness of the professional school counselor and as such, should be nurtured in the field-based setting.

**2. Engaging in equity-focused and culturally-competent leadership and advocacy.** Pre-service counselors should come to understand how local, regional and national politics affect their jobs as well as their ability to effectively serve their students. Therefore, assignments that require students to identify key legislative policies that influence the profession of school counselors can help to advance advocacy skills. Students may write letters to state and local political leaders taking a stand on a particular issue, attend local school board or political town hall meetings, or participate in local lobbying efforts to pass critical legislation. Requiring students to exercise their advocacy skills in practice solidifies the change agent identity, helps them to understand how systemic change and political systems work, and ensures they will have the needed skills to continue these efforts in their professional lives.

**3. Identifying and Closing-the-Achievement-Opportunity-Attainment-Access and Funding Gaps.** In a “closing the gap” assignment, internship students set about locating, using and assessing data to create a needs-based intervention for an underserved population within their school. Students specify the gap specific to students of color, poor and working class students, students with disabilities/gifts/talents, bilingual students, LGBTQ students, etc. Once disaggregated data is used to identify the population and substantiate a need, students then obtain buy-in from their administration, site supervisor, and other professional school counselors in the building. After researching best evidence-based practices, they design and implement an intervention aimed at reducing the gap within their school (Stone & Dahir, 2011). This type of culminating project, and subsequent evaluation, integrates all five TSC competencies, underscores the importance of the ASCA National Standards and Model and upholds the NOSCA underpinnings related to social justice and advocacy (Studer, Diambra, Breckner, & Heidel, 2011).

**4. Creating and using assessments to evaluate change.** Through the use of multiple assessments, school counselors in training practice using process, perception, and results data to become familiar with how using data can inform their practice and substantiate their work. Students may create surveys, questionnaires; and conduct interviews with individuals or through focus groups, as means of collecting data before, during or after interventions. Pre and post tests can be created, administered and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of classroom guidance units, small group lessons or school wide programming.

**5. Sharing results and recommendations with stakeholders.** Counselor training programs may consider hosting their own professional conference that highlights the closing the gap interventions of internship students. Charged with presenting their work via posters, workshops or mini-presentations, students adopt their role as producers of knowledge rather than solely consumers. They learn to advocate for their profession and to create change by demonstrating that professional school counselors contribute to the mission of their schools through effective practice. Students can also be encouraged to present their work at regional, state and national conferences so as to instill this belief and practice further.

The authors of this manuscript purport that preparing school counselors not just in mandatory coursework but also through strong, change-oriented supervision is a requisite for our profession. The core elements of transformed school counseling (Education Trust, 2011) have been conceptualized as “TACKLE:” Teaming and Collaboration, Advocacy, Culturally Competent Counseling, Knowledge and Use of Technology, Leadership, Equity Assessment Using Data (Chen-Hayes, 2007). The CAFE Model for Supervisors, with a focus on equitable outcomes, utilizes each of these core transformative elements in supervision as evidenced by the data-driven artifacts produced by school counseling students as evidenced in gap-closing outcomes and K-12 student results. For example, all school counselors-in-training need to be able to show how they deliver Competencies in *ACCESS* (Chen-Hayes, 2007), that is, Academic, Career and College, Emotional/Personal, Social/Cultural Competencies to all students through their interventions. *ACCESS* combines the ASCA Model Standards and also puts an equal focus on career and college access competencies. A sample rubric for supervision, which highlights and evaluates these skills, can be found in Figure 3.

Additionally, the authors believe that equity-focused communication between school counselor education faculty and K-12 site supervisors, such as regular exchange of specific data, gaps needing closure, and evidence that school counselor candidates’ interventions have assisted in closing gaps is an integral component of the process. Furthermore, equity-focused K-12 school counseling site visits should be conducted by school counselor education faculty to make certain an equity-focus is also used on-site and within the school counseling program, leading to specific K-12 student outcomes and systemic change interventions. These interventions could include evidence of all students having annually updated academic, career and college plans, large group and developmental school counseling lessons delivering specific competencies, and other school wide interventions designed to close gaps and empower all students to reach their dreams.

**Figure 3: Partial Rubric for CAFE Supervision of Individual, Group Counseling & School Counseling Curriculum Lessons**

1. Excellent affirmation of clients’ multiple cultural identities/work with potential oppressions (i.e., students of color, poor and working class students, students with disabilities/gifts/talents, bilingual students, LGBTQ students, etc.)	0-1-2
2. Excellent ability to name client <i>ACCESS</i> strengths and ASCA standard/competency/indicator/NOSCA element addressed	0-1-2
3. Excellent ability to name Achievement/Opportunity/Attainment/Funding Gap(s), critical data element, & process/perception/results data	0-1-2
4. Excellent ability to name systemic issues involved (family, school, community, inequitable policies and practices and how to change)	0-1-2
5. Excellent ability to critique strengths/areas of improvement	0-1-2

## **Implications**

This CAFE supervision model attempts to at least partially address a gap in the way school counselors have been prepared in the past; the gap between that which is actually taught in graduate school counseling programs and that which is the reality of school counseling practice (Education Trust, 2011; NOSCA, 2011; McMahon, Mason & Paisley, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). Theoretically, effective supervision will lead to effective school counselors who maintain effective school counseling programs that contribute to positive K-12 student outcomes. Thus, supervision of school counselors engages at least two levels of outcomes: one direct (the supervisees), and the other indirect (the supervisees' students). One could argue that additional levels of influence are also impacted by supervision such as site supervisors, other counselors, school staff or students' families.

## **School Counselor Outcomes**

A supervisor with a CAFE identity aims to usher into the field school counselors who not only have the knowledge and skills to perform in a school counseling position but those who can create change. Consider the adage, "Give a man a fish, he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime." A CAFE supervisor aspires to instill a change agent identity into new school counselors such that they not only can fish (or find resources), but also so that they can determine new sources for fish, remove barriers to these sources, and address issues of equity of distribution of fish. The CAFE supervisor understands that education reform efforts, legislation, budget cuts and other forces will always be changing and at play when it comes to school counseling jobs. As such, the supervisor's goal is to bolster the supervisees' identity as change agent, and he/she believes that creating change is the perennial charge of the school counselor regardless of decade, district or job description.

Further, these school counselors are able to adapt and can work well and create change in a variety of different schools; their goal of change is constant and their craft is flexible. Such school counselors who embrace the change agent identity also learn to expect barriers and limitations to their work because a CAFE supervisor has helped them normalize obstacles as part of the change process and has guided them through the process of navigating obstacles in their clinical experiences.

## **K-12 Student Outcomes**

The ASCA Standards, The ASCA National Model, NOSCA's Eight Components of College and Career Readiness, and a host of other important documents and initiatives mentioned here are important tools for the CAFE supervisor. However, the CAFE supervisor understands that tools change over time and that his or her role is not just to expose supervisees to current tools but is rather to guide them through how they may look in real world application and how they are used by a change agent. The authors contend that in order to realize results of student achievement, following a model or a list of competencies is not enough; the belief in one's capacity to create change is necessary.

Therefore, one specific factor that the authors believe is possible for K-12 student outcomes of a practicing school counselor trained with a CAFE supervision model is that

positive results and improvements (i.e., graduation rates, college-going rates, standardized test scores, school attendance, factors of positive school climate, etc.) have increased sustainability. This is because the school counselor embraces the responsibility as a change agent and uses the most current tools of the profession in order to create change. Further, the school counselor is identified as an agent of change in the building and actively influences other processes, groups and policies that contribute to improvement in student achievement.

A second specific element the authors believe may be an indication of CAFE supervision, is that K-12 students themselves can identify the school counselor, can articulate what they do in the school and can point out examples of how their school counselors have created change, on a individual student level as well as school wide. Perception data from students themselves about the impact of their school counselor on student outcomes may provide data that supports school-based data reports of achievement or it may point out other data illustrating how the school counselor creates change that cannot be captured in school based reports.

### **Limitations**

As with many new conceptual frameworks, there may be some resistance to putting model into practice with supervisees. University supervisors who were not trained under the TSC paradigm or who do not have a sufficient grasp of the ASCA Model may need some additional training in relation to the necessary competencies needed to utilize the model. In particular, the concepts of social justice, leadership and advocacy, while quickly permeating professional discourse, may be important to address in training. Other supervisors may need assistance in understanding the concept of “flipping the ASCA model inside-out” (as referenced above) by placing one’s change agent identity at the center of supervision practice. Those who traditionally provide supervision for the perfunctory skill sets may need to first consider how compatible their belief systems are with the identity of the CAFE supervisor.

Additionally, the author’s believe that some supervisees may find the CAFE Model for School Counselors challenging if they are anxious about risk-taking or if they struggle with understanding the inherent systemic view of school counseling practice that the CAFE model supports. For this type of supervisee, working with a CAFE university supervisor may also prove challenging if the supervisee perceives that the supervisor is pushing him or her beyond a natural skill set or comfort zone. The CAFE Model for Supervisors was developed in order to challenge current school counseling supervision practices. However, empirical research is needed to fully understand the effectiveness of the model on school counseling trainees as well as on long- term outcomes based on school counselors’ impact on closing gaps in K-12 education.

### **Conclusion**

Increasing school counselor-to-student ratios, lack of career counseling and college access coursework and practicum and internship experiences (Simmons, 2011; Zehr, 2011), and the ambiguity around counselor and college access counseling roles and expectations (Whiston, 2002; Dahir, 2004), indicate a need for change focused on equitable outcomes for every student. Effective university supervision of school counseling students centered around the delivery of career counseling and college access services, with a specific focus on the school counselor’s role as change agent, can help close achievement, opportunity, and attainment gaps for K-12 students. Grounded in professional identity and practical application, the CAFE Model presented

within this manuscript helps to bridge this gap, thus better preparing our students for the immense challenges that lay before them. It would behoove counselor educators and supervisors to be unified under this central mission in order to foster solid preparation and hands-on experiences that lead to an advocacy and equity-oriented professional practice.

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