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United We Stand: Narrative Study to Aid the Counseling Profession in Developing a Coherent Identity

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United We Stand: Narrative Study to Aid the Counseling Profession in Developing a Coherent Identity

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to learn how non-counseling-related professions have navigated the developmental issues the counseling profession has been facing such as (1) strengthening identity, (2) presenting as one profession, (3) improving public perception and advocacy, and (4) creating licensure portability. The researchers provide the narratives of six people from three non-counseling-related professions who have been instrumental in the development of their respective professions. The overarching open-ended research question posed was, “What is the narrative history of your profession?” Follow-up questions were used to explore specific challenges within their respective professions that may have been similar to the developmental issues within the counseling profession. The narrative inquiry study results provided four emergent themes of how the participants navigated their developmental issues: Quality Accredited Education; Professional Identity; A Link between Accreditation, National Certification, a State License; and United Advocacy.

Keywords

Professional Identity, Licensure Portability, Accreditation, Narrative Inquiry

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United We Stand: Narrative Study to Aid the Counseling Profession in Developing a Coherent Identity

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The purpose of the study was to learn how non-counseling-related professions have navigated the developmental issues the counseling profession has been facing such as (1) strengthening identity, (2) presenting as one profession, (3) improving public perception and advocacy, and (4) creating licensure portability. The researchers provide the narratives of six people from three non-counseling-related professions who have been instrumental in the development of their respective professions. The overarching open-ended research question posed was, “What is the narrative history of your profession?” Follow-up questions were used to explore specific challenges within their respective professions that may have been similar to the developmental issues within the counseling profession. The narrative inquiry study results provided four emergent themes of how the participants navigated their developmental issues: Quality Accredited Education; Professional Identity; A Link between Accreditation, National Certification, a State License; and United Advocacy. Keywords: Professional Identity, Licensure Portability, Accreditation, Narrative Inquiry

United We Stand: Lessons Learned from Other Professions

For over half a century, the counseling profession has been struggling with the solidification of professional identity and licensure portability for practitioners (Bergman, 2013; Bobby, 2013; Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010; Lawson, 2016). The American Counseling Association (ACA) began in 1949 (as the American Personnel and Guidance Association, [APGA]) with a proposal for a study that called for “one national voice” and was based on the belief that one unified force would help the counseling profession gain recognition and legislative power (Simmons, 2003). At that time, there were four counseling groups with different guidance foci: (1) vocational, (2) college personnel, (3) supervisors, trainers, student personnel, and (4) teacher education, which by 2017 has expanded to twenty divisions (ACA, n.d.). The increase of number of divisions may have assisted with gaining recognition; however, it may give the impression that the counseling profession is moving toward division (Remly & Herlihy, 2014).

Unresolved issues other than presenting as one profession such as professional affiliation, credentialing, and training have been discussed in counseling literature (Gale & Austin, 2003). In 2005, the ACA and the American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB) co-sponsored the 20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling initiative with the aim of moving the profession forward, resulting in finding consensus in critical issues that need strategic attention by the counseling profession (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). The 20/20 summit was made up of 31 counseling related organizations (Kraus, n.d.) and the delegates developed the *Principles for*

Unifying and Strengthening the Profession, comprised of seven central principles and issues in the counseling profession (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). The strategic areas identified were (1) strengthening identity, (2) presenting ourselves as one profession, (3) improving public perception and advocacy, (4) creating licensure portability, (5) expanding and promoting research, (6) focusing on students and prospective students, and (7) promoting client welfare and advocacy. The organizations which comprised the 20/20 initiative worked together until 2013 to produce the *Consensus Definition of Counseling* (Kaplan, Tarvydus, & Gladding, 2014), the *Building Blocks to Portability Project* (Kraus, n.d.) and the *Passing the 20/20 Torch* (ACA, n.d.), the latter of which is a list of future strategies intended to operationalize specific ways in which future initiatives within the counseling profession might engage in these principles.

Some of the issues on which the 20/20 committee reached a consensus are on title, scope of practice, and a definition of counseling (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). A recommendation was made by the 20/20 committee to all the state licensing boards to promote a licensure title, Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), scope of practice, and the consensus definition of counseling. This was a step forward for licensure portability. However, there are still “multiple variations in state licensing titles and regulations [which] were hampering efforts to develop and implement the AASCB licensure portability plan” (Rollins, 2006, p. 26). The variations are due to multiple factors including differences in state oversight processes, variation in education requirements, and differences in opinion within with counseling profession (Mascari & Weber, 2013). The counseling profession remains divided on educational programs, specialization areas, and accreditation, all of which contribute significantly to intra-state licensure portability.

Since *Passing the 20/20 Torch*, there is evidence within counseling literature that a wide range of professional counseling identities still exist even within counseling leadership (Woo, Storlie, & Baltrinic, 2016). The presence of many differing counselor identities casts doubt that the counseling profession been able to strengthen identity or present to the public as one united profession. The lack of unified identity of the counseling profession is also found in its multiple, and sometimes conflicting, professional codes of ethics. According to Goode (1960) and Herlihy and Remley (1995), one common characteristic of a professional identity is the adherence to a professional code of ethics. However, there are currently at least seven separate ethical codes within the counseling profession; Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, American Mental Health Counselor Association, American Rehabilitation Counseling Association, American School Counselor Association, Association for Specialists in Group Work, International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors, and National Career Development Association, maintaining the impression the counseling profession lacks clarity, cohesion, and a professional identity (Remley & Herlihy, 2014).

Because of the overlap between the work of counselors with marriage and family therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers, there is a struggle for public acceptance of professional counseling as a distinctive and independent profession. This vagueness in the identity of the counseling profession among the public exacerbates credibility issues of the professionalism of counselors (Cashwell, Kleist, & Scofield, 2009; Myers, Sweeney, & White, 2002). Currently, the federal insurance provider for military personnel and their families, TRICARE, cites the lack of common standards in counseling as a major concern (Institute of Medicine, 2010). In many other settings, professional counselors compete with other mental health professionals for jobs and reimbursement of their services (Myers et al., 2002). If these issues are not addressed effectively, it is possible that the counseling profession could be incorporated into

social work, psychology, or marriage and family therapy (Mascari & Webber, 2013). This was in part the reason for the development of the 20/20 principles (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011).

Each state's counseling licensure requirements are similar, but there are different specific provisions (ACA, 2016). Moving to a different state is not uncommon for licensed professionals over the course of their career. ACA receives many calls from counselors licensed in one state, reporting regulatory requirement that they are unable to meet in another state (Kaplan, 2012). Kaplan states further that, "we (The counseling profession) have a real crisis in counseling licensure. Counselors are trapped in their own states," (p.1). Mascari and Webber (2013) posited that a single national accreditation standard is the way to achieve "seamless nationwide license portability" (p. 22). Lawson (2016) provided a historical perspective on counselor licensure and accreditation. The author specifically addressed dissenting opinions within the counseling profession, confirming that the obstacles to counseling licensure portability are not only an issue with the process of individual state licensing boards, but still within the profession as well.

The 2016 CACREP Standards require all counselor education programs to be comprised of a minimum of 60 semester credit hours (or 90 quarter credit hours) beginning July 1, 2020. However, an accreditation body for psychology, the Master's in Counseling Accreditation Committee (MCAC), recently expanded to include counselor education programs with different standards requiring a minimum of 48 semester credit hours (MPCAC, 2014, p. 15). This fragmentation serves to continue the public perception of a lack of unity in the counseling profession and has the potential to negatively affect the ability for professional counselors to have licensure portability based on united educational requirements.

There is inconsistency between state requirements for credit hours, as only 69% (n=36) of states require graduation from 60 credit hour counseling program and others required a 48-credit hour master's degree (ACA, 2016). Thirty states (57.7%) reference the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accreditation as an option for meeting the educational requirements for licensure (ACA, 2016) and as of the date of this manuscript, three states (3.95%) have already begun the process of revising licensure requirement to require a degree from a CACREP accredited counseling program for an LPC license (Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 2016; North Carolina Board of Licensed Professional Counselors, 2017; Ohio Counselor, Social Worker, & Marriage and Family Therapist Board, 2016) and two requiring a degree from a CACREP accredited program for school counseling (Colorado Department of Education, 2016; Louisiana Administrative Code, 2016).

In the area of supervised experience, a majority 62% (n=2) of the states require 3000 total hours of post-master's supervised counseling experience (ACA, 2016). Ten other states come close ranging from 2400 to 3600 hours, and five states require 4000 total hours. A majority of states, 62% (n=31) require 100 hours of supervision. Six percent (n=3) require 180-200, 8% (n=4) require 120-150, another 8% (n=4) require between 50-80, and 17% (n=9) do not specify a number of hours of supervision (ACA, 2016). The last area to be addressed is the examination requirement for licensure. Majority of states, 60% (n=31) require the National Counseling Exam (NCE), 21% (n=11) require the NCE plus the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Exam (NCMHCE), while 19% (n=10) require only the NCMHCE; ACA, 2016).

Educational requirements are especially difficult to supplement when an already-licensed counselor tries to move his/her practice to another state and qualify for its different licensure criteria. Currently, there is a move in a couple of states that may lead to a united education requirement among states around one national standard. Ohio passed a bill that says, beginning in 2018, counselors who attend in-state programs need to graduate from a CACREP-accredited

program to be licensed in Ohio (Ohio Counselor, Social Worker, & Marriage and Family Therapist Board, 2016). Virginia is also in its final stage of requiring graduation from a CACREP program mandatory for licensure acquisition (Lawson, 2014). Some states recognize graduation from CACREP-accredited programs for licensure such as Alabama and Arkansas (ACA, 2016). The move toward one educational accrediting body for counseling programs may be considered a way of “simplifying things for everybody” (Bobby, 2015). According to Mascari and Webber (2013), recognizing a single national accreditation standard is the way to achieve “seamless nationwide license portability” (p. 22).

Myers (1995) highlighted the fragmentation of the counseling profession as due in part to the lack of coordination within credentialing organizations, which results in a “lack of comprehensive professionalization” (Myers et al., 2002, p. 395). The 20/20 delegates were not able to come to a consensus on the set of licensure education requirements, although, the CACREP curriculum received the highest number of votes. As consensus was not obtained on professional counselor educational standards, the 20/20 committee passed this torch to the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES). ACES developed an Educational Standards Task Force engaging CACREP, CORE, AASCB, NBCC, and ACA to establish baseline education standards for licensure as a professional counselor (ACES, n. d.). CACREP was identified as the gold standard in counselor preparation by this task force (ACES, n.d.). Similarly, the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) certification requires student educational requirements to follow the guidelines set forth by CACREP and by 2022, qualification for national certification will require graduation from a CACREP accredited training program.

Research Rationale

Thus far the counseling profession has not been able to develop clear solutions or resolutions to the 20/20 issues. Since counseling is a relatively new profession, it may be worthwhile to look outside ourselves to find new ideas and alternatives. Other professions may have experienced developmental challenges similar to the consensus issues outlined by the 20/20 initiative with success, so it may be beneficial to understand how other professions have been able to navigate and possibly overcome issues. Alternatively, perhaps the counseling profession can learn lessons from other professions who have not been so successful. Scholarly works provided a tradition of borrowing best practices from one profession and applying it to another (Barnard & Greenspan, 2003; Grosberg, 2001). Grosberg (2001) provides a review of medical school education and recommended application to the unrelated field of legal education. Barnard and Greenspan (2003) explored the use of incremental licensure for physicians and suggest a similar approach might provide an improvement over the bar admission process. A review through EBSCO Host and PsychINFO of similar literature within the field of counseling yielded no results. Looking to and learning from professions unrelated to counseling may provide insight and solutions to the current stage of development of the counseling profession and provide parity with similar related helping professions such as social work, marriage and family therapy, and psychology.

The purpose of this research was to understand the experiences of key people from developmentally more advanced professions, and to acquire knowledge of how similar issues were navigated by other professions. The focus of this study was on the first four consensus issues for advancing the profession of counseling from the 20/20 committee related to professional identity and licensure portability. The specific consensus issues of focus were (1) strengthening identity,

(2) presenting ourselves as one profession, (3) improving public perception and advocacy, and (4) creating licensure portability. The goal was to learn ways other professions have overcome or successfully navigated similar obstacles in order to contextualize the counseling profession issues and find solutions that may be able to move the profession forward.

Conceptual Framework

This study was conducted from a social construction epistemology. Specifically, the researchers for this study maintained the ontological belief that there is no one absolute observable truth about reality. Consistent with this belief is the idea that each individual develops a reality based on social constructions of the mind (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The epistemological assumptions were that individuals develop varied and multiple subjective meanings of their experiences, leading the researchers to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The researchers relied as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied.

The researchers acknowledge the axiological assumptions that this research is value laden and that biases are present. This research addressed the experiences of participants within their respective professions, recognizing that the researchers' backgrounds, beliefs, and involvement shaped the interpretation of the data. How the researchers were positioned in the research acknowledged how interpretation flows from personal, cultural, and historical experiences. It was the intent of the researchers to inductively make sense of or interpret the meanings of the participants, which was then used to develop a narrative or story of meaning rather than beginning with a hypothesis that is confirmed or disconfirmed.

Authors' Personal Experiences

Both authors were doctoral students in counselor education were selected from a national pool of applicants as CACREP research fellows when we initially conceptualized this study. The first author was in a program in the northeast and the second author was in a program in the northwest United States. The following are summaries from the researcher identity memos that directly related to the topics under study. In terms of strengthening identity of the counseling profession, the first author came from a country where counseling does not have a strong identity, often confused with social work and psychiatry. One of her career goals is to lead the counseling profession in her home country in developing a strong professional identity. The first author believes that a strong identity originates with a sound accredited education. The second author began with a divided professional identity, due in part to her training as a marriage and family therapist in a counseling program in a state where there was no counseling license. Specializing in career, the first author believes that all mental health professions grounded in the wellness model should be together as one profession with specialists, in the same way physicians, pediatricians, and orthopedists are all medical doctors. The second author also sees counseling as one profession and compares it to different states within one country. The first author sees the United States as a nation-wide pool of human resources; however, limited licensure portability keeps the profession from the benefits of this advantage. The second author has had a personal experience of moving from one state to another and going through the licensure application process. She is also the chair of a regional committee that specifically addresses license portability within the counseling profession.

Method

Narrative inquiry was selected as the most appropriate method because of the focus on the collection of stories and documents from individuals and group conversation that is intended to convey some message or point (Riessman, 2007). The researchers were interested in obtaining a deep understanding of the experiences of people from other professions, as opposed to a broad representational model that could be generalized (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Glaser, 1978). The foundational questions in narrative inquiry ask what the narrative or story reveal about the person, the world from which it came, and how this narrative can be interpreted so that it provides an understanding of and illuminates the lives and culture that created it (Patton, 2014). This research aimed to gain a detailed description of a range of the participants' views and actions as they related to navigating challenges within their respective professions. The questions were intentionally broad and general so that the participants could construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussion or interactions with other persons. Most interview questions were open-ended and as broad as possible, to help the participant think beyond the surface (Riessman, 2007). The initial questions were developed from the first four 20/20 issues.

Participant Selection

Approval was obtained from the first author's IRB then subsequently submitted and approved by the second author's IRB. The researchers intentionally sought participants "from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry," (Patton, 2014, p. 230). Two strategies of purposeful sampling, criterion and snowball, were included. Criterion sampling established that all cases met a predetermined condition of importance (Patton, 2014). Snowball sampling is a method for locating information-rich participants and begins by asking, "Who knows a lot about _____?" The snowball grows with the collection of new information rich cases and in most arenas eventually the number of people converge as a few key names are mentioned repeatedly.

According to the U. S. Department of Labor (2013), there are over 800 occupations. Criterion sampling was used to narrow the focus of this research to occupations that are considered professions. Goode (1960) outlined 10 traits that have been a consistent set of conditions for an occupation to be defined as a profession. The researchers compared the Goode (1960) definition with the 20/20 consensus issues to find overlapping areas from which to develop the criteria. The criteria used to define a profession from which to find participants were occupations with (1) ethical standards defined by the profession, (2) national accreditation body for specialized training, (3) issues similar to those of the 20/20 initiative in counseling, (4) not a mental health profession, and (5) not physicians or nurses. Similar professions were excluded because of the intention of this study to go outside the helping professions. Additionally, physicians and nurses were excluded because the high demand for their services and governmental involvement precluded them from facing similar challenges (Woerheide, Lake, & Rich, 2016).

To narrow participant selection, the researchers began with the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA). Membership required the profession have a specific occupation with significant specialized training. At the time of this research, there were 62 professions listed as members of ASPA. Reviewing each of the professions and applying the five criteria narrowed the list into the following professions; Architecture, Audiology/Speech-Language Pathology (A/SLP), Library Science, and Teaching.

Snowball sampling was used to locate the key informants within each profession. The second author was responsible for contacting national associations of the four selected professions to inquire, “who knows a lot about the history of your profession?” and “who has been instrumental in the development of your profession?” By asking these questions and engaging in snowball sampling following Patton’s (2014) guideline over a period of nearly three months, information-rich key informants were accumulated. The second author developed an electronic spreadsheet to compile a list of these key informants for each profession. The first author recruited potential participants initially through phone and email contact. When an identified key person expressed interest in participation, the first author sent an invitation letter and informed consent through email.

In contrast to quantitative studies, there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2014). When seeking depth, then a smaller number of people can be more valuable, especially if the cases are information rich (Patton, 2014). Among the professions found through criterion sampling, the authors were able to recruit seven participants (five female and two male) from the four professions of Architecture, Audiology and Speech Language Pathology (A/SLP), Library Science and Teaching. Only one key participant agreed to participate from the profession of Architecture and was therefore not included in the final analysis.

Data Collection

The first author obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the use of human subjects for this study from her academic institution. The second author submitted the approval to her institutional IRB and was granted an endorsed approval for this study. Both authors collected data and conducted a review of available documents for each profession throughout the entire research process. Documents found by one author were provided to the other author. Additionally, participants provided documents, which both authors reviewed.

Both authors were present for all interviews. The interviews were semi-structured and audio- or video-taped. Due to the nationwide nature of the participants of the study, interviews were conducted using an electronic video conferencing platform or by telephone. All interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service (Speechpad).

Interviews. The researchers used a standardized and open-ended interview approach through the development of carefully worded initial interview questions (Patton, 2014). To conduct standardized open-ended interviews and maintain consistency, the research began with the same initial questions, then based on responses follow-up questions would be asked by either author based on the responses and information from documents. The researchers developed the initial questions based on the 20/20 initiative issues as follows:

1. What is a narrative history of your profession? (In other words, can you describe the history of your profession’s development as far you know, have heard, read, or experienced?)
2. How has strengthening identity been successfully navigated within your profession? (Have there been any challenges? If so, can you tell us more about that? If not, do you know how your profession has been able to build a strong professional identity or what contributed to your profession being able to do so?)

3. Does your profession present as one united profession? (If so, how has presenting as one united profession been successfully navigated within your profession? Have there been any challenges? If so, can you tell us more about that? If not, do you know how your profession has been able to unify as one united profession?)
4. Is the public perception of your profession generally positive? (If so, how has public perception been successfully navigated within your profession? Have there been any challenges? If so, can you tell us more about that? If not, do you know how your profession has been able to obtain positive public perception?)
5. Does your profession have licensure portability within the U.S.? (If so, how has licensure portability been successfully navigated within your profession? If not, what challenges has your profession encountered? Can you tell us more about that? If any challenges have been successfully navigated, can you tell us how that was accomplished and what significantly contributed to that success?)

The interview was a combination of a standardized and open-ended approach, and an informal and unstructured conversational method for maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appeared to be appropriate (Fontana & Frey, 2003). Follow-up questions flowed from the immediate context, depending on what emerged within the interview. Each initial interview lasted between 60-90 minutes each. A follow-up interview was conducted if the participant wanted to clarify, revise or discuss further the author's coding and analysis, which also lasted between 60-90 minutes each.

Documents. Both authors separately conducted a review of the literature available in each participant's profession prior to the interview. For example, the authors reviewed websites, public documents, books, magazines, or newspapers on the profession. The participants were encouraged to provide public and private documents such as internal memos, letters, email, or any other printed material with information that might be related to the topics under study. Documents included participant journals, public documents (e.g., websites), and any private documents provided by the participants (e.g., personal memos, personal notes, or scratch pieces of paper). When documents were provided by the participants, both authors reviewed all of the documents.

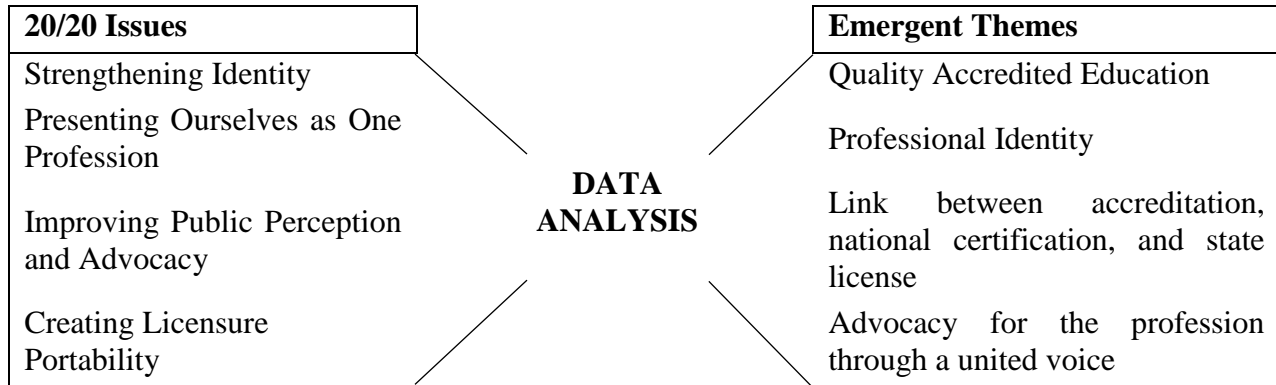
Data Analysis

Close attention was paid to language and the meanings that participants attribute to words (Clandinin, 2006; Riessman, 2007). Coding included thematic and structural analysis of the documents and transcribed narratives of the interviews (Riessman, 2007). The authors developed initial questions based on the 20/20 initiative issues and also created a priori thematic groups based on the 20/20 consensus issues. Specifically, the a priori thematic groups we developed were (1) strengthening identity; (2) presenting ourselves as one profession; (3) improving public perception and advocacy; and (4) creating licensure portability, which served as a resource for interpretation of spoken and written narratives. Each author engaged in textual analysis on each paragraph, which we reviewed for main points, episodes, events, and what narratives were developed about the profession under study.

Structural analysis is how the narratives are organized and how the narrators' aims are achieved (Riessman, 2007). The authors used an adaptation of Labov's (1972) structural coding to code sentences or phrases through labeling them as (a) chronology with epiphanies and events and (b) plot with characters, setting, problem, action, and resolution. The researchers coded each

transcript separately and placed the data into the a priori thematic groups, then met to compare and obtain consensus. Part of the analysis process was to compare the narrative data to the collected documents. Each author developed a list of clarification questions that were asked of the participants during the follow-up meeting with the participants. Through this intentional coding, the participant stories, events, and epiphanies were analyzed according to similarities with the themes consistent with the 20/20 consensus issues for the counseling profession. Four themes emerged as illustrated in Figure 1 as a result of our analysis.

Figure 1: 20/20 issues and emergent themes from data analysis



Throughout this study, from data collection to the re-construction of the narrative story, the researchers engaged in journaling to express ideas and reactions. The journals contained observations, thoughts, patterns, and the relationships of them as well as how the themes might correspond to the counseling profession. The researchers openly discussed values that shaped the narratives and co-constructed interpretations of participants through consensus.

Triangulation

Triangulation strengthens a study and Denzin (1978) identified four basic types of triangulation; data, investigator, theory, and methodological triangulation (Patton, 2014). Data triangulation incorporated into the methods of this study was through the use of a variety of data sources such as interviews and documents. Data was also triangulated within each profession through two participant perspectives. Investigator triangulation was integrated with two researchers who were both present during each interview. Theory triangulation was incorporated into the design through feedback provided by external auditing. Specifically, the coding was reviewed by a colleague who has extensive qualitative research experience for comments and feedback. The use of multiple methods, such as interviewing, observation, and reviewing documents within the design of this study provided methodological triangulation. All transcripts, coding, categories, and final narratives were passed back through participants. Prior to the follow-up interview, the first author sent their respective coding to each participant. Prior to and during the follow-up interview, the participants were encouraged to provide clarification and input into the coding. This member checking process additionally increased trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis.

Results

Through data analysis, four overarching themes emerged: Quality Accredited Education, Professional Identity, A Link between Accreditation, National Certification, and State License, and United Advocacy, from two participants each from three professions: teaching (the interviewees will be indicated as A and B), A/SLP (C and D), and library science (E and F) profession.

Theme 1: Quality Accredited Education

Quality Accredited Education is defined as an educational system vetted by an outside body that officially recognizes the program as having a particular status or being qualified to educate prospective practitioners (Eaton, 2006). All three professions have accreditation bodies for their higher education programs. All of the participants described the importance of education and training for future practitioners as a way of strengthening their profession. Each of the three professions has improved their accreditation system through rigorous and standardized application and renewal process to guarantee quality of education. The history of the teaching profession, described by A, provided an example of how a profession has expanded its educational requirements to strengthen professionalism and develop the accreditation system. During the last century, training for teachers evolved from an initial two years post-high school to four years with a baccalaureate degree after World War II. This has been further extended as graduate degrees are required in some states for the initial teaching license or for specializations. Participant A described the development of accreditation for teacher education.

...the site visits would be concerned about how many books there were in the library, and what was the ratio of faculty to students and resource kind of issues. And it wasn't until 2000, that in education we began to move more towards a performance approach. And we actually developed a set of standards in the previous organization that put a lot of emphasis on evidence that was taken from assessments: if the candidates actually knew the things that were being taught to them as part of the courses and [if they] were able to do them.

According to both of the participants from the A/SLP professions, they have strong, long-standing ties to university settings, and therefore have a knowledge base that is grounded in educational curriculum. The accreditation process for academic training programs is rigorous and standardized with regard to expected learning outcomes. A graduate degree is required to become a certified practitioner and the quality of graduate education is assured by an accreditation body, which has been serving the profession over 50 years. According to C, A/SLP accreditation includes consumer involvement in certain areas of decision making, particularly when evaluating and revising accreditation standards to reflect the needs and languages of the consumers.

In contrast, there is a movement to de-professionalize the profession of library science through a reduction of job qualifications from master's to bachelor's degree and lower salaries, due in part to the use of accessible search engines and technology to the general public. According to E, Librarians fight against this situation by trying to keep their core identity, finding information, and adapting to technology including the use of search engines. Their association, ALA (American

Library Association) provides accreditation to graduate programs and works with CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation) for school librarians.

Accreditation is a great tool for assuring quality among educational institutions (Eaton, 2006). Public bodies such as governments consider accreditation as a reliable authority on academic quality, as shown by the active embrace of accreditation to the licensure process from state governments (e.g., A/SLP, counseling profession, teaching profession, etc.). Accreditation also helps engender private sector confidence towards graduates from the educational institutions (Eaton, 2006). The on-going evaluation process through renewal systems also helps to ensure quality improvement of the educational institutions, which would lead to the improvement in trainee's competence in their profession.

Theme 2: Professional Identity

The authors define Professional Identity as shared image of the profession by practitioners that is grounded in knowledge and skills through advanced degrees and clinical experiences. The participants from the three professions described different issues related to the professional identity of their respective professions. According to B, teachers have a strong shared identity. However, A illustrated the struggle in the professional identity of teaching profession between maintaining the status of teaching as a "profession" with advanced educational requirements versus teaching as a "vocation" with less educational preparation. According to A some people related to the teaching profession think that the required skill set for teachers can be acquired easily without requiring a specialized degree, because *"everybody has been to school."* A also described providing commensurate pay as a way to strengthen the need of advanced education and expertise in the field. A/SLP has a strong professional identity based on rigorous educational requirements and both public and member's perception of its professionalism, as described by both the participants. E, in library science, noted that even though the librarian profession has strong public recognition, the public perception of it as a person who stacks and/or locates books is incorrect, which has led to current professional identity crisis. Low payment is seen as barrier for those with a graduate degree who want to be a librarian. According to E, librarians fight against this situation by keeping their core identity, curating information, and integrating technology.

Theme 3: Link between Accreditation, National Certification, and State License

The authors define Link between Accreditation, National Certification, and State License as a shared language between accreditation standards for educational institutions, national certifications that are provided by the association of each profession, and licenses that are provided by state governments for legal grounds of the practice. This theme emerged from the A/SLP profession, from the answers from C and D on how to strengthen professional identity and to build a foundation for licensure portability. According to both of the participants, A/SLP pursues consistency in education, accreditation, and licensing systems to supply competent graduates who are expected to become well-respected professionals. According to C, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) supports the national accreditation body, which is housed in the same building, although does not influence their decisions. Only graduates from accredited programs are eligible for certification by ASHA and the requirements for licensure in each state directly or indirectly mirror the requirements for the certifications. ASHA, plays a significant role

to ease the transfer process of licensure initially through lobbying with model license law language and ongoing monitoring of each state licensure board, as described by C.

... if you open up any of those [state license board requirements] in Speech Language Pathology or Audiology, it will say, "To qualify for a license in [state], you have to do these many things, pages and pages of things, or if you have the Certification of Clinical Competency from the American Speech Language Hearing Association, you can be automatically licensed in our state." ... I confess, my association did a lot of lobbying, when the licensure laws are being developed in every state, to make sure that that was an option for people, that if they did have their CCC (certification), that they would be able to be licensed in that particular state to practice in Audiology or Speech Language Pathology.

Both participants from the teaching profession described that the state's licensing requirements for teachers are based on graduation from a training program accredited by CAEP. B described that NASDTEC (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification) aims for individual states to vote to adopt the national certification standards for development of uniform and consistent licensure system. No discourse related to the theme, Link between Accreditation, National Certification, and State License, was found in library science.

Theme 4: United Advocacy

The authors defined United Advocacy as the public support for the profession that comes from the voice of the members of the profession joined together politically for a common purpose. Each profession described the current issues that need advocacy. Examples from each profession are provided to highlight what United Advocacy might look like in differing developmental stages. Participant A (teaching profession) described that there is not sufficient financial remuneration for teacher's work. Both participants from the teaching profession believed that there is a need to conduct research and provide empirical evidence for quality teacher training and what defines the profession. A/SLP is working towards achieving expanded coverage from insurance companies for their practice. In library science, the advancement of computer systems and the internet has significantly impacted the scope of practice and threaten the existence of the profession.

Advocacy work as a united profession emerged as a solution to address current tasks. In the teaching profession according to A, CAEP explores the public education systems in other countries to discover ways to learn from them. B perceives that teachers have a wide range of backgrounds and foundational knowledge which makes it difficult to have one set of accreditation standards to guide the profession. However, according to A, many educators came together to advocate for a united profession with the goal of developing a consistent set of accreditation standards to describe the profession.

...people, who participated in developing the new standards...believed that it was very important for the profession to speak together, and that's why they liked the really diverse membership that was represented on the standards commission.

A/SLP is a good example of united professions and the resultant stronger voice. As the name indicates, it includes two separate professions: audiologists and speech language pathologists.

They maintain two certifications and two licenses. However, they share one association ASHA, a guardian of this unity, and one code of ethics under the one discipline of communication sciences and disorders. This is because they acknowledge the aggregated power in the collaboration of the two, especially in the advocacy work. According to D, ASHA develops a national agenda for the advocacy of the profession through its public policy committee. Professional association members are then asked to participate in advocacy to help achieve their goals.

I don't think it (having two professions) makes it an obstacle but it does make a broader array of issues. But we are a large association. We have 182,000 members. We have a staff of 280 individuals so we have...we could always use more resources, but we have a lot of resources that we can engage our professional staff in our advocacy efforts and our members by giving them materials and talking points and resources so they can contact their members of congress.

F in library science worried that the profession has divided into two identities: library and information science. E also mentioned that public perception librarian identity has been fragmented and obscured by their work settings in academia, public library, or school library, which has led to the failure of developing a united voice. Both participants highlighted the need for the profession to come together. However, E found it difficult to imagine united advocacy work at the national level to change public misperception:

But for our professional identity, [individual approach] is really not the most efficient way to go about creating it [accurate public perception of librarian], like personally helping every individual, because that's impossible... it's just so hard to go up against what people's perceptions of librarians are versus what we actually do on a daily basis.

Discussion

The 20/20 committee, through *Passing the 20/20 Torch*, listed several developmental goals for the future of the counseling profession (ACA, n.d.). This study explored how other professions have responded to similar developmental issues. From the analysis, the authors found the importance of quality education through accreditation, development of professional identity, link between accreditation, national certification, and state licensure, and advocacy for the profession through a united voice to the development of a profession. These four themes also seem to be effective to resolve the issues raised in the 20/20 committee (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011), since the 20/20 initiative shares many similar developmental issues with the professions explored in this study, for example, licensure portability. Not all the four themes were converged from all three professions studied, but the themes overlapped depending to their developmental stage of the profession. In other words, the four themes from the three professions illustrated developmental stages of a profession, and each profession yielded themes that contribute to each developmental stage.

All participants acknowledged the value of quality education for future professionals. Requiring a graduate degree was considered a reflection of professionalism, which led to the development of a professional identity. The educational institutions are managed through accreditation in all three professions. The accreditation organizations appear to have evolved from

quantitative to qualitative evaluations and include student outcomes. Similarly, CACREP has also developed a balanced way of assessment between quantitative and qualitative outcomes. The outcome of students has been also included in the evaluation. It was interesting that the A/SLP professions include consumers in their accreditation system. Study results confirm the value of CACREP and the need of its continuous development for the counseling profession (Mascari & Webber, 2013).

The struggles that teachers experience in presenting themselves as a professional occupation can be applied to issues facing counseling. As teachers hear “everybody has been to school”, counselors may hear “everybody knows how to listen,” possibly leading to the marginalization of counselor professional knowledge and competence which many counseling leaders and researchers have worked hard to avoid, through identifying the factors that strengthen public trust towards the counseling profession (Fall, Levitov, & Jennings, 2000). Having a license regulated by state governments and having an ethical board based on its own ethical codes were found to be the strengthening factors (Fall et al., 2000; Francis & Dugger, 2014). It is suggested that counselors take notice of this risk in counseling and carry the baton to maintain these efforts (Francis & Dugger, 2014).

Here are some examples of the struggles described by the teaching and library science professions from the narrative of participants. As with teachers, there is a need to secure commensurate financial rewards, which if overlooked, may lead to less people choosing counseling as a profession. Conversely, financial rewards may encourage those who are considering counseling as a career to pursue the required education and training (McMillan, McConnell, & O’Sullivan, 2016). Another possible effort gleaned from library science is for a profession to have adaptability and flexibility. Library science is facing difficulties in adjusting their job definition with the new technology while keeping the core identity (e.g., Westbrook, 2015). This suggests the need of the counseling profession to keep pace with the development of new technology while keeping a core identity as a counselor (Sampson & Osborn, 2015).

The third theme, a link between accreditation, national certification, and state license, may suggest one way of resolve portability issue of the counseling profession. A/SLP and the counseling profession shares a similarity that the expertise of both are grounded on master’s level education that are provided by nationally accredited education curriculum. This suggests that the counselor profession can also have one national certification based on accredited education curriculum, which can provide unified language to state licensure boards. In the U. S., each state has the authority to license counselors in their jurisdiction, and licensed counselors experience the disadvantages of this model when moving from state to state. National certification can provide the basis to write specific language that can be used as a model for state licensure rules and laws, which will help to have consistent counseling license requirements nationally and within each state. The strength of this model is that the counseling profession can utilize systems that are already in place. Since the 20/20 principles are announced, CACREP, AASCB, NBCC, and ACA have cooperated to build a shared understanding of education and scope of practice facilitating consistent education and licensure system.

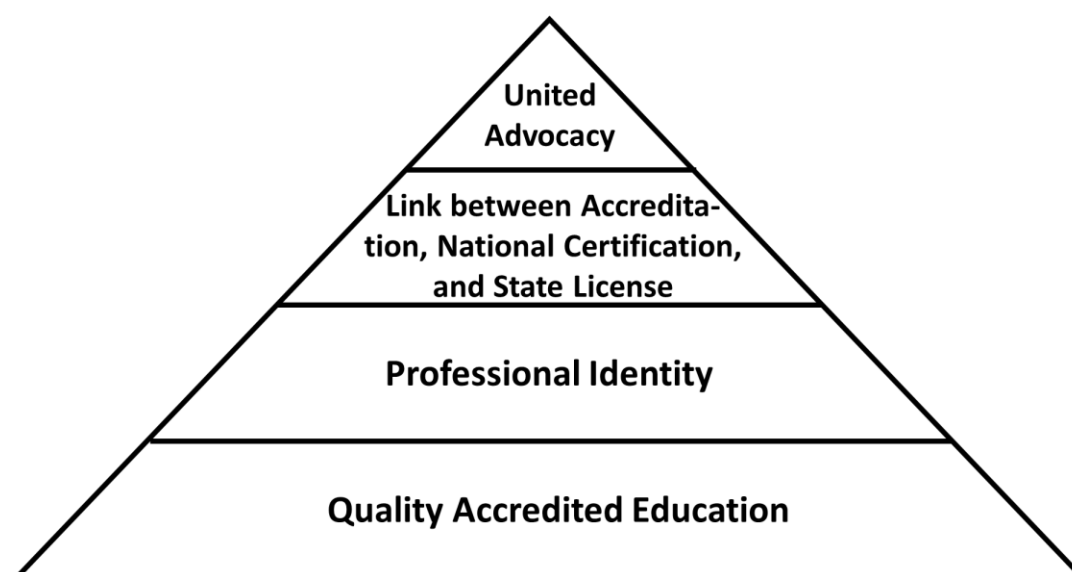
According to all participants, the goals of the profession cannot be achieved without advocacy. All participants shared a belief that the more members, the more power advocacy work can have. Teachers would not be perceived as important a group, if they were not united. A/SLP is two professions and they realized the benefits of joining together, giving a stronger voice to their advocacy projects. They are a good example of professions from which counseling can learn. This model might be applied to the profession of counseling through the acknowledging of the

uniqueness of specializations and maximizing the synergy and power of working together to achieve common goals. The counseling profession is not a melting pot of lost identities, but rather distinct and coexisting specializations together in one salad bowl.

If the counseling profession applies this cohesive concept using the 20/20 consensus language, its existing specializations (i.e., clinical mental health, school, clinical rehabilitation, addictions, etc.) can maintain identities as unique disciplines that are united within the umbrella of the counseling profession. This validates the goals of the 20/20 initiative in Kaplan and Gladding (2011). The authors heard some regrets and fears from library and information science; that they have not been able to solidify and present as a united voice and have not figured out a way to overcome fragmentation related to the scope of practice. In contrast, A/SLP found strength in national influence, legislation, and public perception through uniting under the umbrella of communication sciences and disorders. The information provided by the participants provides insights into what has worked well, and what has not worked so well, for other professions. If the counseling profession fails to build a united identity, we may be in danger of losing our current standing (Watts, 2004). As discussed previously, the presence of multiple accreditation bodies may threaten public perception of unity in the counseling profession. In contrast, the recent merger of CACREP and Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE; CACREP, 2016) showed an effort to build a united identity through accredited education, implying the importance of unity.

Some in the counseling profession have predicted that the splintering of groups leads to loss of identity and voice. This study provides the empirical support that this is a very real concern based on the narrative from the librarian science profession, which is experiencing the loss of professional identity after fragmentation of different names to represent the profession. This suggests ways that the counseling profession can prevent fragmentation and present its voice loud and clear by uniting the profession with a rigorous education, a specialized accreditation system, and national standard for licensure that would make portability a reality for counselors (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). The key to the intertwined themes is that professional identity begins with a rigorous educational system and accreditation of training programs which develops shared knowledge and professional background as illustrated in Figure 2. The many voices from each specialization can join together to speak as one providing advocacy for one another to maintain rigorous education, professional identity, and the link between accreditation, national certification, and state licensure. Currently, some states are integrating CACREP language into state licensure requirements. In order to continue this momentum towards licensure portability, the counseling profession can unite in advocacy for state licensure laws to suggest education requirements to be consistent with CACREP accreditation standards as well as the 20/20 consensus scope of practice and licensure title, licensed professional counselor (LPC). It was seen that library science profession struggled in moving forward to the next developmental stage, and it may be caused by that the profession has missed one or two themes in its development. Therefore, one united voice for the advocacy is crucial and this is possible through unified education curriculum and, if not united at least similar licensure process. If the practitioners in one profession have different education backgrounds and expertise, there is high possibility that their advocacy will not be united. Missing a theme at a lower level may lead to a failure to achieve upper level themes, because one provides base for the other, as it is described above. This shows the role and relationship of the four themes playing in the development of the profession.

Figure 2: Building blocks for moving ahead as a profession



The following are some limitations of this study. First, replicating the current method using different participants in the same or different professions may yield different results. Additionally, the use of technology may have impacted the depth of the narratives as the participants may have felt more or less comfortable to share insights. Hearing from members can be different from leaders, who were the participants of this study. It would be interesting to see if there would be contrasts in perception and insights of the same issue with participants who are members. The authors used narrative inquiry, furthermore other qualitative methods can give different perspective in understanding. A grounded theory study of professions might shed light on common themes of the developmental processes of professions. Phenomenological studies of the experiences of professional association leaders could provide insights into the successes and struggles encountered in moving a profession forward., It might be interesting to conduct an ethnography of the counseling profession as a culture [group](#). Through an ethnography, the knowledge and the system of meanings in the counseling profession might provide insight into the basis for the challenges and possibly uncover ways to overcome hurdles to a united profession. Quantitative studies to determine readiness and openness to change, degree of alignment to specializations in the counseling profession or isolating specific challenge variables is recommended.

The CACREP Standard are revised every seven years, however, there has not been enough empirical evidence providing rationale for the existing standards. There also lack studies that guide the revision of each standard. A case study of other professions' developments in their accreditation body can be beneficial to inform possible areas of change and growth. Technological changes affect many occupations in terms of needed skills, scope of practice, or even definition of the occupation. A study of the impact of technology new to the counseling profession, and the requisite adjustments the educational process may direct changes. Future research may include studies within the counseling profession about awareness of being a united profession of specializations and interest in doing so.

There are many studies on the advocacy work of counselors. However, there are few if any studies about advocacy for the profession in terms of models and specific areas of need. A case study using other professions could be conducted to learn how they have advocated for themselves and which approaches have been effective. Interestingly, the decline of library and information science was not apparent through the participant selection process, providing support that listening to key persons situated inside a profession can provide rich material that

is not evidenced through the review of publicly available information. This study demonstrated the importance of not just relying on empirical literature but hearing the narratives from individual voices.

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