The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision

Volume 8 | Number 1

Article 7

2016

The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision Spring 2016 Full Issue

The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.wcsu.edu/jcps

Part of the Higher Education Commons, Other Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons, and the Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons

Recommended Citation

The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision (2016). The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision Spring 2016 Full Issue. *The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, 8*(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.7729/81.2016

The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision Sprin	ng 2016 Full Issue
This complete issue is available in The Journal of Counsel	or Proporation and Cunomision

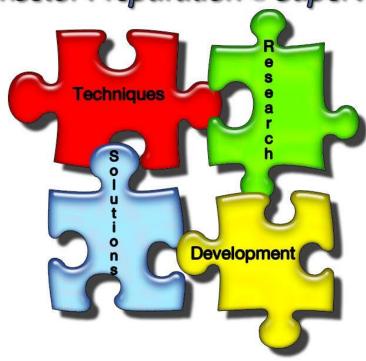
The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision

Volume 8, Number 1
Editor: Dr. Edina Renfro-Michel

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7729/81.2016

Spring 2016 ISSN 2164-3288





Office Journal of the North Atlantic Regional Association for Counselor Education and Supervision

Editor
Edina Renfro-Michel
Montclair State University



Associate EditorMike Mariska
Plymouth State University



Assistant Journal Editor Ellery Parker Walden University

Editorial Board

Roberto L Abreu

University of Kentucky

Vanessa Alleyne

Montclair State University

Jennifer Beebe

Niagara University

Janine Bernard

Syracuse University

Ford Brooks

Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

Beverly Burnell

Plattsburg State University

Stacia Ann Carone

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

William Casile

Duquesne University

Stuart Chen-Hayes

Lehman College

Blaire Cholewa

University of Virginia

Devika Dibya Choudhuri

University of Saint Joseph

Mikai C. Crawford

Husson University

Kim Desmond

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Kathryn Douthit

Rochester University

Deborah Drew

Husson University

Michael Dubi

Argosy University

Stacey Havlik

Villanova University

Jessica A. Headley

The University of Akron

Jelane A. Kennedy

College of Saint Rose

Leslie Kooyman

Montclair State University

Gabriel Lomas

Western Connecticut State University

Sandra Lopez-Baez

Walden University

Melissa Mariani

Florida Atlantic University

J Barry Mascari

Kean University

Gary McClain

Montclair State University

Elizabeth McDonald

Walden University

Aida Midgett

Boise State University

Cheryl Notari

Montclair State University

Ann Ordway

Fairleigh Dickenson University

Eva Reed

Walden University

Lacey A. Ricks

University of West Georgia

Derek X. Seward

Syracuse University

Jason T. Duffy

Syracuse University

Tracey Duncan

New Jersey City University

Louisa Foss-Kelly

Southern Connecticut State University

Linda Foster

Walden University

Harriet Glosoff

Montclair State University

Yuh-Jen Martin Guo

St. Cloud State University

Michael Hannon

Montclair State University

Robin Hausheer

Plymouth State University

Angela Sheely-Moore

Montclair State University

Matthew Shurts,

Montclair State University

Marcella Stark

Texas Christian University

Cassandra Storlie

Kent State University

David Tobin

Gannon University

Marie Wilson

Caldwell University

Tyler Wilkinson

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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.

Techniques. These articles focus on professional models for teaching empirically grounded techniques used by professional counselors, as well as teaching and supervision techniques used in professional preparation programs.

Counselor Development. These articles include insightful commentary on means by which professional counselors can continue to develop professionally. Effective teaching strategies for counseling students as well as continuing education for experienced counselors will be highlighted.

Supervision. These articles specifically target ideas, research, and practice related to counselor supervision. These articles should investigate and discuss supervisory issues from a perspective applicable to site supervisors, counselor educators and/or clinical supervisors (e.g., supervising professionals working toward a professional counseling license).

Issues, Concerns and Potential Solutions. These articles identify and discuss significant issues facing the field of professional counseling with particular focus on issues in counselor preparation, professional development, and supervision. Exploration of these topics should include elaboration of the concerns as well as an examination of potential remedies or effective responses to the issues.

Clinical Supervisors Stories. These articles describe current issues in counselor preparation and supervision from the perspective of site supervisors. The emphasis on these articles should focus on the story of the issue, potential solutions and the uniqueness of the message. Authors are encouraged to forgo significant literature review and attend directly to the intended message to the field.

The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision is an EBSCOHost and ProQuest affiliated journal. It is indexed under the Education Research Complete database.

Submission Guidelines

*Because JCPS is an on-line journal, all correspondence and submissions are electronic. Authors are to submit manuscripts in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx), or rich text format (.rtf). We do not accept Macintosh or WordPerfect formats. Submissions to the journal should be sent to: http://repository.wcsu.edu/jcps/

General Submission Rules

Submitted articles cannot have been previously published, nor be forthcoming in an archival journal or book (print or electronic). Please note: "publication" in a working-paper series does not constitute prior publication. In addition, by submitting material to The Journal for Counselor Preparation and Supervision, the author is stipulating that the material is not currently under review at another journal (electronic or print) and that he or she will not submit the material to another journal (electronic or print) until the completion of the editorial decision process at The Journal for Counselor Preparation and Supervision. If you have concerns about the submission terms for The Journal for Counselor Preparation and Supervision, please contact the editors at jcpsnaraces@gmail.com.

Formatting Requirements

The Journal for Counselor Preparation and Supervision requests the following formatting for submitted manuscripts: the manuscript must adhere to APA 6th edition, be no more than 30 pages, use 12-point Times New Roman font, be double spaced including references and extensive quotes, have 1" margins on all sides, and include an abstract of no more than 120 words. Please also see the rules governing the formatting of the final submission on our website.

It is understood that the current state of technology of Adobe's Portable Document Format (PDF) is such that there are no, and can be no, guarantees that documents in PDF will work perfectly with all possible hardware and software configurations that readers may have.

Permissions: Copyright is held by the North Atlantic Regional Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (NARACES). NARACES grants reproduction rights to teachers, researchers and libraries for scholarly purposes on the condition that no fee for use or possession of copies is charged to the ultimate consumer of the copies.

Publication: The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision is published biannually (April and October). Subscription is provided free of charge.

NARACES Membership:

Benefits include:

- The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision
- Conferences
- Newsletters
- Networking
- Leadership Opportunities

Dues (paid bi-annually):

- Professional Member \$32 (\$16 per year)
- Student Member \$10 (\$5 per year)
- First Year Professional \$16 (Free first year, \$16 second year)
- Retired Professional FREE!

Dues are collected for 2 years of membership. During even numbered years (i.e., 2010, 2012) NARACES holds its bi-annual conference. Your membership will expire the month of the conference. For your convenience, membership dues can be renewed as part of our regional conference registration fee. For more information or to join NARACES, visit us on the web at: http://www.naraces.org.

The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision

Spring 2016 Volume 8 Number 1

Editorial Notes Edina Renfro-Michel

Articles

Differences in Perceptions of Supervisee Contribution: Supervisors' vs. Supervisees' Evaluations

Marcella D. Stark, Kelly Greggerson

Using Song Lyrics to Enhance Counselor Trainee Perceptions of their Reflective Listening Skills

Eric Davis, Jennifer Pereira

Intentional Work Group Experiences: A Pedagogical Tool for Counselor Educators

Brian Hutchison, Melissa Odegard-Koester, Rebecca Koltz

Responding to Race Related Trauma: Counseling and Research
Recommendations to Promote Post-Traumatic Growth when Counseling African
American Males

Amanda M. Evans, Carrie Hemmings, Christopher Burkhalter, Virgina Lacy

Is The Personal Theoretical? A Critical Incident Analysis of Student Theory Journals

Allison Hrovat, Melissa Luke

Factors Related to Enrollment in a Counseling Program

Tyler Wilkinson, John McCarthy

© 2016 by the North Atlantic Regional Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. All rights reserved.

Editorial Note

Our Spring issue covers topics for supervisors, counselor educators, and counselors. Focusing on supervision, Stark and Greggerson discuss their research regarding supervisor and supervisee perceptions of supervisee openness and discuss ways to encourage supervisees to be more proactive. In counselor education, authors investigated using song lyrics to increase reflective listening skills in counseling students (Davis & Pereira), examined an activity to increase student self-awareness and skills when participating in work groups (Hutchison, Odegard-Koester & Koltz), utilized counseling students' journal entries to determine how self-disclosures impact the determination of theoretical orientation (Hrovat & Luke), and explored reasons for counseling students enrolling in a Master's program (Wilkinson & McCarthy). For counselors, Evans, Hemmings, Burkhalter and Lacy have a practice-based article describing the application of the Post-Traumatic Growth approach with African American men.

As editor, I thank the editorial staff for their hard work to produce quality manuscripts for JCPS. I want to recognize my new associate editor, Michael Mariska, and congratulate him on being elected president-elect of NARACES. I also want to thank our editorial assistant Ellery Parker, and my Graduate Assistants, Elaine Chu, Massiel Rosario, and Lauren Spinella, for their many hours of editing, as well as for keeping me on track and organized. As always, I thank the NARACES board for their constant support.



Edina Renfro-Michel, Editor

Differences in Perceptions of Supervisee Contribution: Supervisors' vs. Supervisees' Evaluations

Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, Volume 8, Number 1, Spring 2016

Marcella D. Stark, Kelly Greggerson

Supervisees' behaviors contribute to or detract from effective supervision. The purpose of this study was to compare supervisors' evaluations of supervisee contribution behaviors with that of supervisees' self-assessments using the Adapted Supervisee Utilization Rating Form (SURF). Statistically significant differences in the ratings indicate that supervisors perceive their supervisees as more proactive and open than supervisees perceive themselves. To create a milieu in which supervisees feel safe enough to share their work with supervisors and encourage supervisees to take initiative in their own learning, the researchers make the following recommendations: (1) following ACES best practices for monitoring and assessing supervisees, (2) using appropriate supervisor self-disclosure, and (3) adopting a solution-focused approach to supervision.

Keywords: supervisee contribution, nondisclosure, solution-focused supervision, supervisory relationship, supervisory working alliance

Supervised experience is a requirement in the counseling profession. Most state licensing boards require mental health counselors to have their work supervised for a period of time post-graduation before they may become fully licensed (Borders & Brown, 2005). The supervisory relationship is considered crucial in developing counselor competence (Corey, Haynes, Moutlton, & Muratori, 2010; Falender & Shafranske, 2007), but relative to the supervisor's impact on supervision, the supervisee's role has received less attention in supervision literature (Lizzio, Stokes, & Wilson, 2005; Pearson, 2005). In order for supervisors to fulfill their responsibilities for developing competency in their supervisees and protecting the public, supervisees cannot be passive bystanders in the supervision process. Researchers (Norem,

Magnuson, Wilcoxon, & Arbel, 2006; Pearson, 2004) have noted that supervisees can contribute to the effectiveness of their supervision through behaviors that involve being proactive in their learning and open with their supervisors. It is clear that supervisee contribution behaviors impact the quality of clinical supervision, but do supervisors and their supervisees define and assess these behaviors in the same manner? With the current study, researchers endeavored to determine whether supervisors and supervisees evaluate supervisee contribution behaviors similarly.

Review of the Supervision Literature

Counseling trainees are required to complete a supervised experience in their educational program and post-graduation employment (Borders & Brown, 2005). Through supervisory relationships, new counselors receive guidance and support as they put their academic training into practice. By taking risks and trying out new interventions supervisees develop their clinical skills. Supervisors are responsible for helping supervisees develop metacompetence (Falender, 2014). Falender and Shafranske (2007) defined metacompetence as "the ability to assess what one knows and what one doesn't know" (p. 232). Gaining metacompetence allows supervisees to become more aware of their knowledge, their limits, and an overall idea of their proficiency with clinical skills. Supervision sessions typically involve discussion of client cases, in which the supervisee provides both an account and reflection of what has transpired in their sessions, and future interventions are deliberated (Bernard & Goodyear, 2013; Corey et al., 2010; Omand, 2010). The propensity of supervisee self-report as a method for monitoring used in clinical supervision (Amerikaner & Rose, 2012) suggests that many supervisors assume a degree of metacompetence; specifically, they assume that supervisees have the ability to appropriately selfmonitor and understand what information is relevant to disclose in supervision sessions.

Supervisory Relationship

The supervisory relationship is evaluative and has three simultaneous purposes: (1) enhancing the professional growth of the supervisee, (2) monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the clients that she or he sees, and (3) serving as a gatekeeper for those trainees who are to enter the particular profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2013). The bond between a supervisee and supervisor is likened to a teacher with her classroom (Bordin, 1983). As in a teacher-student relationship, there is an inherent power differential due to the evaluation component of supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2013; Borders & Brown, 2005; Hess et al., 2008). A strong bond between supervisor and supervisee is important for a positive working alliance in which fear of evaluation does not inhibit supervisee growth.

Supervisory working alliance. The supervisory working alliance is the partnership dedicated to counselor development (Bordin, 1983; Gard & Lewis, 2008) and considered to be the "heart and soul of supervision" (Watkins, 2014, p. 20). Bordin (1983) distinguished three key aspects in a supervisory working alliance: agreed-upon goals, tasks undertaken to reach those goals, and the bond between supervisor and supervisee. The supervisory working alliance has a positive correlation with supervisees' satisfaction with supervision (Humeidan, 2002; Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999) and presents an opportunity for supervisors to influence their supervisees through modeling. Supervisees learn to deal with problematic issues in the counselor-client relationship based on what the supervisor has demonstrated in the supervisory relationship (Gard & Lewis, 2008; Shulman, 2005). In their recommendations for creating a strong supervisory working alliance, Gnilka, Chang, and Dew (2012) advised supervisors to adhere to the goals and tasks of the supervisee, encourage supervisees to take control in the supervision process, and constantly monitor the stress level experienced by supervisees and the

coping resources that supervisees have available throughout the supervision experience. The creation of a strong supervisory working alliance contributes to a supervisee's willingness to share necessary information in supervision (Ladany, Hill, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996).

Supervisee openness. Beginning counselors often experience anxiety about their performance and how they are perceived by the supervisor evaluating them (Borders & Brown, 2005; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). Supervisees often feel reticent to disclose any clinical weaknesses or issues pertaining to the supervisory relationship (Borders & Brown, 2005; Farber, 2006; Ladany et al., 1996; Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010). Indeed, Mehr et al. (2010) discovered that 84.3% of trainees in their study withheld information in supervision, with 20% reporting worry about how they would be judged both personally and professionally by the supervisor. Other reasons for supervisee nondisclosure include fear of hurting the supervisor's feelings, lack of confidence in the supervisor's competence, feelings of professional insecurity, and fear of being criticized or receiving negative reactions from supervisor (Reichelt et al., 2009). Conversely, supervisors attribute supervisees' withholding information about their clinical work to insecurity, desire to hide mistakes, and feeling as though they have made a fool of themselves (Skjerve et al., 2009).

A strong supervisory working alliance is related to reduced supervisee stress (Briggs & Munley, 2008; Gnilka et al., 2012), and may contribute to supervisees being more open. Likewise, openness in supervision is one way that supervisees contribute to a strong working alliance and positive supervision outcomes (Spence, Fox, Golding, & Daiches, 2014). According to Farber (2006):

Learning is best accomplished when we are open and fully disclosing about what we do and don't know, about mistakes we've made, about the ways we have thought about tasks that need to be accomplished, about the feelings we bring to these tasks, and what we believe we need to learn. (p. 181)

Yet, Farber admitted that this statement disregards the shame and vulnerability that supervisees may experience when disclosing what they think and feel. If there is a frequent lack of openness, both the supervisory relationship and clinical work of the supervisee suffer (Farber, 2006). Facilitating such openness is considered one of the most effective behavior skills of supervisors (Ladany, Mori, & Mehr, 2013).

Supervisee Contribution

Supervisee contribution refers to efforts made by supervisees to be proactive and take responsibility for their own learning and professional growth (Norem et al., 2006; Pearson, 2004). In addition to openness (i.e., disclosure of pertinent information) in supervision, examples of supervisee contribution include reviewing session recordings, preparing a list of questions for supervision meetings, and implementing supervisor suggestions with clients (Stark, 2015; Norem et al., 2006; Pearson, 2004; Vespia, Heckman-Stone, & Delworth, 2002). Further, advanced supervisees are self-aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and emotional reactions to clients (Norem et al., 2006; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010), and they are "amenable to exploring their experiences related to clients and supervisors" (Norem et al., 2006, p. 7). Other key factors influencing positive supervisory outcomes include maturity, autonomy, perspicacity, motivation, self-awareness, openness assertiveness (Norem et al., 2006), and honoring oneself through patience and being aware of needs (Gazzola & Theirault, 2007).

The construct of supervisee contribution is further clarified with descriptions of what it is not. For instance, a supervisee's lack of assertiveness and discounting oneself in the supervision process may lead to negative outcomes for the supervisory relationship (Gazzola & Theirault,

2007). Additionally, lower levels of intrapersonal and interpersonal development (e.g., inability to understand the client's perspective, unwillingness to consider feedback, and defensiveness in supervision), restricted knowledge base and understanding of the counseling process, lack of resourcefulness for learning and willingness to grow, and a constant focus on the mechanics of therapy are areas of deficiency that may hinder supervision (Wilcoxon, Norem, & Magnuson, 2005).

Using the Construct of Supervisee Contribution

At the onset of supervision, the supervisee may be unaware of what to expect in the process. Preparing trainees for supervision may prove beneficial in establishing expectations of their contributions to the supervisory relationship (Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Bernard & Goodyear, 2013; Pearson, 2004). "Discussing [supervisee contribution] behaviors, their importance, and how they could be demonstrated might prove particularly helpful in the supervisory dyad" (Vespia et al., 2002, p. 63). Vespia, Heckman-Stone, and Delworth (2002) identified the behaviors of counselor trainees who contribute to their own supervision by asking both supervisors and supervisees to identify the most important supervisee behaviors on an 11-point scale and the least important supervisee behaviors on the same scale. Using this list of effective behaviors, Vespia et al. developed the 52-item Supervisory Utilization Rating Form (SURF) as a tool to facilitate discussion between supervisors and their supervisees.

Vespia et al. (2002) recommended that additional research "be conducted in which supervisors and supervisees complete the SURF as an actual evaluation (or self-evaluation) of performance rather than rating the items as to importance" (p. 64). Following their suggestion, this study used an adapted form of the instrument and compared the responses of board-approved supervisors in two Southern states with the responses of Licensed Professional Counselor-Interns

(i.e., post-master's supervisees who are seeking licensure) in the same two states. The purpose of this study was to compare supervisors' evaluations of supervisee contribution behaviors with the supervisees' self-assessments.

Method

The primary research question for this study was "What is the relationship between supervision role (i.e., supervisor and supervisee) and ratings of supervisee contribution?" To answer this question, a survey research design was employed, using an adapted version of Vespia et al.'s (2002) SURF (Stark, 2015). Based on the findings, as well as Amerikaner and Rose's (2012) finding that supervisee-initiated case presentation is the most frequently-used method of supervision, the researchers became curious about whether or not supervisor participants relied on supervisee self-report in their supervisory assessments. Therefore, the researchers developed a post-hoc research question: What percentage of supervisors rely on supervisee self-report when evaluating supervisees? Survey demographic data were used to answer this question.

Participants

After receiving approval from an Institutional Review Board, the researchers recruited participants from random samples of 1,000 Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) Interns and 1,000 LPC Supervisors, identified from rosters posted by the counselor licensing boards of two Southern states. All pertinent ACA and ACES ethical codes for research were followed. A total of 275 participants, 118 supervisees and 157 supervisors, completed surveys. Of these participants, 64 (23.4%) participants were male, 210 (76.6%) participants were female, and one participant declined to report identified sex. Ages ranged from 24 to over 65 in both groups. However, the majority of the supervisors (n = 108, 68.8%) were age 45 and over, with a mode range of 55-64, whereas only 14 (11.8%) of the counseling interns were over the age of 45, with

a mode range of 24-34. The ethnic breakdown was as follows: Asian/Pacific Islander (n = 1, .4%), Black/African American (n = 28, 10.2%), Hispanic/Latino/Latina (n = 24, 8.8%), Multiple Heritage (n = 11, 4%), Native American (n = 1, .4%), White (n = 207, 75.5%), and Self-identified Other (n = 2, .7%). The intern sample was somewhat more diverse with 34.7% (n = 41) of the participants identifying as non-White as opposed to the supervisor sample where only 17.2% (n = 27) identified as non-White.

Measures

The measures used to collect data included parallel forms of a demographic survey including the Supervisee Demographic Questionnaire and Supervisor Demographic Questionnaire and the Adapted SURF Supervisee Form and Adapted SURF-Supervisor Form. The Adapted SURF is a modification of Vespia et al.'s (2002) SURF, which was reported to have content validity demonstrated "by the use of experts in the field in item development" (p. 63), but no reported reliability. The instrument contains 51 Likert-response items of supervisee contribution behaviors. Supervisors were given a prompt to "Please select one current or recent supervisee who is representative of your typical experience in supervision (neither the best nor the worst). On the following items, please indicate how consistently this Intern exhibits the following behaviors." Conversely, supervisees were asked "Please indicate how consistently you display each behavior in the context of your LPC supervision." The Adapted Surf contains five subscales of behaviors, including Professional, Proactive, Self-Awareness/Growth-Seeking, Clinical Competence, and Relational Skills in the Supervisory Relationship, based on an exploratory factor analysis and demonstrated reliability alpha values ranging from .80 to .92 (Stark, 2015).

Data Collection and Analysis

As a result of a review of the literature concerning research response rates (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009; Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004), the researchers used different data collection methods for each participant group in effort to obtain the highest response rate possible. Supervisors received hard copies of the Adapted SURF-Supervisor Form, an informed consent, demographic survey, and a postage-paid return envelope, via postal service. As an incentive for their participation, LPC Supervisors were offered an electronic copy of the instrument for personal use once the study has concluded. Researchers coded and entered returned surveys into SPSS manually. Alternatively, supervisees received postcards soliciting their participation and providing both a weblink and QR code for an online survey. They were offered the incentive of a gift card to an online store. Data from supervisee participants were gathered using an online version of the demographic survey and the Adapted SURF-Supervisee Form, which was created in the QualtricsTM online software program, and downloaded into SPSS. Two to three weeks after the initial contact, the researchers sent both groups reminder postcards in efforts to increase the response rate.

Research question 1: What is the relationship between supervision role and ratings of supervisee contribution? Data analysis was conducted utilizing SPSS 19.0. First, the researchers calculated and reviewed descriptive statistics to check for normality and determine appropriate analyses. Second, the researchers split the dataset into two groupings of supervisors and supervisees, and the mean ratings for each group were examined for all 51 items. A mean difference of .30 or greater was set *a posteriori* to reduce the number of items for evaluation. Because the dependent variable (i.e., Likert-rating responses) constituted ordinal data, the two categorical groups were independent, and the distribution violated rules of normality, the

researchers used nonparametric, independent samples *t*-tests to determine whether the differences between the two groups were statistically significant (Morgan & Leech, 2006).

Research question 2: What percentage of supervisors relies on supervisee self-report when evaluating supervisees? The demographic survey included the question: What methods does your supervisor use to assess your skills [for supervisors, what methods do you use to assess specified intern]? Check all that apply. Options were provided that included co-counseling, live supervision, reported behaviors by intern, review of progress notes, review of audio-recorded sessions, review of video-recorded sessions, and an open-ended "other." The researchers used descriptive statistics to tally the responses of both sample groups to ascertain whether supervisors were using multiple methods of evaluation or relying on supervisee self-report.

Results

Research Question 1

A cursory comparison of the means between the two groups yielded 10 items with a difference of .30 or greater. The researchers conducted nonparametric Mann-Whitney U tests to determine the statistical significance of the differences. Table 1 presents all 10 items, with means and standard deviations for each group, U statistics, and p values of significance. Nine of the items had a rate of error below the Bonferoni-adjusted alpha of .005. The only item that did not reach this adjusted level of significance was *collaborate in setting agenda for supervision sessions*. The supervisors rated the frequency of the behavior as occurring more frequently than the supervisees for each of the items.

Effect sizes varied according to Cohen's (1988) criteria. Attempt new behaviors or interventions in counseling sessions and create and share treatment plans with supervisor had

the largest effect sizes, both at .80. Items with moderate effect sizes included *strive to achieve* specific supervision goals at .66, collaborate with supervisor in directing the flow of supervision sessions at .52, and implement supervisor's directives related to client welfare at .58. The remaining items had low effect sizes ranging from .39 to .44.

TABLE 1. Differences Between Groups

Item	Interns		Supervisors		Man	Mann-Whitney	
	Mean	<u>S.D.</u>	Mean	<u>S.D.</u>	\underline{U}	Significance	
Strive to achieve specific supervision goals.	3.21	.895	3.68	.532	6561.5	.000	
Attempt new behaviors or interventions in counseling sessions.	2.96	.074	3.25	.647	7502.0	.003	
Collaborate with my supervisor in directing the flow of supervision sessions.	2.93	.967	3.39	.792	6712.5	.000	
Implement supervisor's directives related to client welfare.	3.44	.711	3.78	.462	6950.5	.000	
Create and share treatment plans with my supervisor.	2.84	1.054	3.42	.394	6286.0	.000	
Make work available for observation and feedback.	3.03	.862	3.39	.784	6920.0	.000	
Collaborate in setting agenda for supervision sessions.	2.85	1.043	3.18	.873	7690.5	.011	
Tolerate ambiguity by struggling for answers.	2.79	.941	3.13	.705	7433.5	.003	
Set appropriate goals for supervision (as considered by both supervisor and intern).	3.25	.915	3.61	.586	7452.0	.002	
Discuss issues related to the supervisory relationship when brought up by supervisor.	3.02	1.013	3.38	.812	7496.5	.003	

Research Question 2

Based on our sample of participants, 12% (n=33) reported only the use of supervisee self-report as a means of supervisee evaluation. Fewer supervisors (n=11,7%) reported the use of supervisee self-report alone than did supervisees (n=22,18.6%). Although supervisee self-report was the most common, with 86.4% (n=236) of participants reporting its use, the vast majority of participants reported multiple means of assessment, with review of progress notes (n=190,69.6%) and live supervision (n=108,39.7%) being the second and third most common methods, respectively. Live supervision (n=27,73%) and review of progress notes (n=21,56.8%) were the most common methods of evaluation for those participants who reported no use of supervisee self-report. Fewer participants reported the use of co-counseling (n=72,26.4%) and review of audio-recorded sessions (n=48,17.6%) or video-recorded sessions (n=9,7.8%).

Discussion

For nine supervisee contribution behaviors, supervisor ratings were statistically significantly higher than the supervisee self-ratings. One explanation for supervisors' higher ratings is that they view their supervisees' investments as a reflection of their own success as a supervisor. Walfish, McAlister, O'Donnell, and Lambert (2012) noted that mental health providers tend to perceive themselves at a higher level of practice in comparison to others in their field. This assertion did not hold true for the supervisees in the study, but it is possible this perception of superiority extends to the realm of supervision. Supervisors may see their supervisees as extension of themselves, leading them to inflate the ratings of their supervisees.

Of course, supervisees do not always do what their supervisors think they do, which may be another explanation for the statistically significant differences in responses between the two groups. This explanation of the differences supports the assertions in the literature that supervisees may not always disclose relevant information in supervision. The differences in responses with the largest effect sizes demonstrated a lack of openness on the part of supervisees; they were more reluctant to attempt new counseling interventions, make their work available, and share treatment plans. Recognizing that there could be other confounding variables influencing the data, the researchers postulate this hesitancy could be out of fear that any therapeutic shortcomings observed will result in a negative evaluation. Supervisees may believe they cannot fail at a new counseling intervention if they do not attempt it, and mistakes in their work cannot be found if they do not make their work available to their supervisors.

Borders and Brown (2005) pointed out, "Supervisees are asked to be vulnerable and self-disclose their professional inadequacies and their personal biases to the same person who will grade them, write letters of recommendation, or complete reference forms for licensure" (p. 67). In addition to the power differential inherent in supervisory relationships (Bernard & Goodyear, 2013; Hess et al., 2008), supervisees tend to be personally invested in their work. Due to counseling being personal, perceived therapeutic failures may impact a supervisee's self-concept as both a helper and a person (Borders & Brown, 2005). Hess et al. (2008) explored nondisclosures within the supervisory relationship and found that pre-doctoral interns gave concerns about evaluation and negative feelings as reasons for nondisclosure, regardless of whether their supervisory relationship was good or problematic. They were anxious about disclosing clinical mistakes for fear their supervisor would judge them. Indeed, the difference in the reports of supervisors and supervisees regarding the three behaviors mentioned (i.e., attempt new counseling interventions, make their work available, and share treatment plans) suggests

that post-graduate, pre-licensed counselors might also struggle with the dilemma of whether or not to disclose relevant information for fear of negative repercussions.

Most of the behaviors with statistically significant differences (see Table 1) fell into two of the primary areas of supervisee contribution: openness with supervisor (e.g., creating and sharing treatment plans, making work available for observation and feedback, discussing issues related to the supervisory relationship) and proactiveness (e.g., setting appropriate supervision goals and striving to achieve them, attempting new behaviors in counseling, collaborating with supervisor to direct flow of supervision). However, perhaps the most alarming of the significantly different ratings is the implementation of supervisor's directives related to client welfare because it has the most potential to harm clients. The Texas Board who governs a large percentage of the participants in this study sanctions supervisors for the actions of their supervisees (Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors, 2014), because supervisors are considered to be liable for every client of each of their supervisees. Therefore, it is incumbent upon supervisors to actively monitor the counseling of their supervisees to ensure their directives are being implemented.

When left to self-report what has transpired in their counseling sessions, supervisees have control over what to disclose or not disclose in the supervision session (Ladany et al., 1996). Ladany et al. (1996) investigated the reasons a supervisee may not disclose certain information in the supervision process, and they learned that, most often, supervisees were passive by keeping information from their supervisors. In 83% of the cases they researched, the topic of nondisclosure simply was not brought up by the supervisee and had never been directly asked by the supervisor (Ladany et al., 1996).

It is clear that some of the supervisor participants also rely on their supervisees to be forthcoming about whether or not directives were implemented. Of the participants in this study, 12% indicated that supervisee self-report was the only method used for evaluation. A higher percentage of supervisees reported this circumstance than supervisors. Although it is possible that the supervisee participants were unaware of all the methods their supervisors were using to evaluate them, supervisees would know if they were being asked for case notes and audio or video recordings or if their supervisors were providing live supervision or co-therapy with clients. The disparity more likely results from the frequency of these methods. Supervisors would be aware if another method (aside from supervisee self-report) was used even once, whereas supervisees may be more likely to consider assessments that occurred frequently or recently. In sum, although the results support previous research findings that self-report is a common method of assessment used in supervision, a majority of the supervisors appear to follow the best practice of using multiple methods. Nevertheless, it would appear that supervisees are still able to give their supervisors a false impression of what they are doing.

Implications for Supervision

Based on the outcomes of this study, the researchers suggest that supervisors can impact supervisee contribution by: (1) creating a safe milieu in which supervisees feel comfortable making their work available for feedback and expressing feelings about the supervisory relationship, and (2) following best practice recommendations for monitoring and evaluation in supervision. Supervisors can help supervisees feel comfortable sharing their work and treatment plans through self-disclosure. Supervisor self-disclosure can be useful for normalizing supervisees' struggles, both in the development of clinical skills and in accepting supervisory recommendations (Santa Rita, 1996). Allowing supervisees access to the supervisor's own

difficulties (past or present) with similar issues is a way of providing support. Ladany and Walker (2003) suggested that supervisor self-disclosure communicates a level of trust which could enhance the supervisee's trust with the supervisor. With increased trust, supervisees may be willing to be more open with their supervisors.

In addition to appropriate supervisor self-disclosure, the researchers recommend solution-focused supervision (SFS; Juhnke, 1996; Thomas, 2012), an approach that builds on supervisee strengths and promotes supervisee-initiated goal-setting to create a strong supervisory work alliance and encourage supervisee openness. Solution-focused supervision involves highlighting times of therapeutic success and acknowledging the supervisee's competency both inside and outside of their professional experience. By focusing on what supervisees are doing well rather than on their deficiencies, supervisees develop clinical self-efficacy (Koob, 2002). Self-efficacy allows supervisees to risk attempting new behaviors or interventions in counseling sessions.

To encourage openness in the relationship, solution-focused supervisors attempt to minimize the power differential inherent in supervision through collaboration, and by using tentative language when offering their own perceptions. Supervisors using a solution-focused approach also make a habit of asking their supervisees for feedback (e.g., how was this meeting useful for you?), in part, to model the practice for their supervisees to use with clients. The practice of asking for feedback follows Gnilka et al.'s (2012) recommendation for supervisors to monitor the supervisory working alliance. Seeking feedback on a regular basis can make discussions of the supervisory relationship more commonplace and thus more comfortable for the supervisee.

To increase supervisee proactiveness, the researchers recommend goal setting, which is an integral (and collaborative) part of SFS. Bordin (1983) had delineated goals as a key aspect of the supervisory working alliance. To encourage supervisees to be proactive in their learning, solution-focused supervisors ask specific goal-formulation questions of their supervisees. Juhnke (1996) offered the following example:

If we were to make a videotape of the counseling you do today and fast-forward 16 weeks into the future and videotape a counseling session you will be doing, how will these videotapes be different? What will you be doing in the second videotape that you weren't doing in the first? ("Techniques for Identifying Goals," para. 2)

By collaboratively setting goals and keeping those goals as the focus of supervision, supervisees have an opportunity to work toward what is important to them, and supervisors set up an expectation that supervisees will be proactive in their learning. Collaborative goal setting aligns with suggestions made by Gnilka et al. (2012). The structure of SFS puts in place a clear expectation that supervisees will *strive to achieve specific supervision goals* and *collaborate with supervisor in directing the flow of supervision sessions*, each of which had differences of moderate effect sizes in the present study. Thomas (2012) suggested that supervisors separate performance evaluation from the goal-setting process as much as possible. Thomas explained that when the two are linked, supervisees "often avoid the possibility of failure by taking fewer risks, as small success and reward can be more enticing than risking more and failing" (p. 89). Similarly, supervisees may simply refrain from disclosing information about their counseling practices.

In addition to strengthening the supervisory working alliance and creating an atmosphere of trust, supervisors should follow the best practices outlined by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES; 2011) for monitoring and assessing their supervisees. Specifically, they should take time to inquire about any directives given rather than assuming

that they have been carried out. Ladany et al.'s (1996) finding that most supervisee nondisclosures were topics that the supervisor did not directly ask about indicates the need for supervisors to follow-up with their supervisees regarding the implementation and outcomes of given directives. It is imperative that supervisors actively monitor the counseling of their supervisees to minimize their liability for supervisee infractions, as well as to protect the welfare of their supervisees' clients.

In agreement with best practices identified by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision's (ACES, 2011), the researchers suggest supervisors document supervision session notes and use multiple methods of assessing supervisees, including the use of videos or live supervision. The researchers add that supervisors should review supervision notes immediately preceding the next meeting. The review can prompt supervisors to ask about the outcomes of their previous conversation. The old management adage, *You can't expect what you don't inspect* (Stone, 1990) is also true in clinical supervision. Farber (2006) noted that supervisee nondisclosure has a negative impact on supervision outcomes, and Falender (2014) argued that if the only form of supervision is through self-report, the supervision will be limited due to the supervisee's lack of metacompetence.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

As is typical in social science research, a sampling bias exists because the researchers obtained data only from those supervisors and supervisees who agreed to participate in the study. The participants may place a higher priority on supervision than those who did not participate. The sample population was limited to two Southern states; caution should be taken in generalizing to a wider population. Additionally, the sample population contained an overrepresentation of female participants; however, this majority of females may be

representative of counselors in the United States (Evans, 2010). Readers should note that the researchers based the comparisons between supervisors and supervisees on self-report data (i.e., their perceptions) rather than on any objective measure of supervisee contribution. The study used independent samples of supervisors and supervisees. Although both groups of participants were selected from the same two states, the supervisee participants may have had different supervisors than those supervisors who participated in the study. Future studies should involve matched pairs to determine whether there are differences in a given supervisory dyad.

The researchers discovered differences between supervisors and supervisees in their perceptions of the construct of supervisee contribution, but the reason for these differences is beyond the scope of this study. In addition to concerns about evaluation (Hess et al., 2008), a poor supervisory alliance, negative reactions to the supervisor, and perceived unimportance of the information kept hidden are all common reasons that supervisees do not disclose information to their supervisors (Ladany et al., 1996). Mixed-method research involving qualitative interviews may help address why supervisees are not following supervisor directives or engaging in other behaviors to contribute to their own supervision. Future researchers should examine this construct from a developmental perspective to determine how supervisee self-ratings change as they gain experience and/or remain in supervision.

Conclusion

Supervision in counseling is essential for the proper training of upcoming mental health professionals. Supervisees can contribute to the effectiveness of their supervision by being proactive in their learning and by being transparent with their supervisors, but statistically significant differences between supervisors and supervisees in ratings of supervisee contribution behaviors suggest that supervisees do not perceive themselves to be as proactive and open as

indicated by supervisors' ratings. Supervisors should follow ACES (2011) best practices for supervision to increase supervisee contribution as well as to effectively monitor supervisees.

Supervisors can increase the likeliness of these contributions through a strong supervisory working alliance. Supervisees share more openly when there is a strong supervisory working alliance (Ladany et al., 1996), and Gnilka et al. (2012) recommended adherence to supervisee-initiated goals, encouragement of supervisees to taking control in the supervision process, and monitoring of the supervisory relationship as ways to strengthen that alliance. The researchers propose that SFS is an approach that meets those objectives. The collaborative structure of SFS, with appropriate use of supervisor disclosure, may create a safe atmosphere in which supervisees can make the most of their supervision and develop into clinically competent counselors—the kind of mental health counselors in whom clients can place their trust.

References

- Amerikaner, M., & Rose, T. (2012). Direct observation of psychology supervisees' clinical work:

 A snapshot of current practice. *The Clinical Supervisor*, *31*, 61-80. doi:10.1080/07325223.2012.671721
- Association for Counselor Education and Supervision [ACES]. (2011). *Best practices in clinical supervision*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Berger, S. S., & Bucholz, E. S. (1993). On becoming a supervisee: Preparation for learning in a supervisory relationship. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 30*(1), 86-92.
- Bernard, J. M., & Goodyear, R. K. (2013). *Fundamentals of clinical supervision* (5th ed.) Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Borders, L. D., & Brown, L. L. (2005). *The new handbook of counseling supervision*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Bordin, E. S. (1983). Supervision in counseling: II. Contemporary models of supervision: A working alliance based model of supervision. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 11(1), 35-42.
- Briggs, D. B., & Munley, P. H., (2008). Therapist stress, coping, career sustaining behavior and the working alliance. *Psychological Reports*, 103, 443-454. Doi:10.2466/PR0.103.6.443-454.
- Cohen, J. (1988). Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Corey, G., Haynes, R. H., Moulton, P., & Muratori, M. (2010). *Clinical supervision in the helping professions: A practical guide (2nd ed)*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J.D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Evans, M. (2010, August 2). Men largely MIA from counseling. *Counseling today*. Retrieved from http://ct.counseling.org/2010/08/men-largely-mia-from-counseling/
- Falender, C.A. (2014). Clinical supervision in a competency-based era. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 44(1), 6-17. doi:10.1177/0081246313516260
- Falender, C. A., & Shafranske, E. P. (2007). Competence in competency-based supervision practice: Construct and application. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 38(3), 232-240. doi:10.1037/0735-7028.38.3.232
- Farber, B. A. (2006). Self-disclosure in psychotherapy. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Gard, D. E., & Lewis, J. M. (2008). Building the supervisory alliance with beginning therapists. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 27, 39-60. doi:10.1080/07325220802221470
- Gazzola, N., & Theirault, A. (2007). Super- (and not-so-super-) vision of counselors-in-training: Supervisee perspectives on broadening and narrowing processes. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 35(2), 189-204.
- Gnilka, P. B., Chang, C. Y., & Dew, B. J. (2012). The relationship between supervisee stress, coping resources, the working alliance, and the supervisory working alliance. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 90(1), 63-70.
- Hess, S. A., Knox, S., Schultz, J. M., Hill, C. E., Sloan, L., Brandt, S., Kelley, F., et al. Hoffman, & M. A. (2008). Predoctoral interns' nondisclosure in supervision. *Psychotherapy Research: Journal of the Society for Psychotherapy Research*, *18*(4), 400-411. doi: http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1080/10503300701697505

- Humeidan, M. A. (2002). *Counseling self-efficacy, supervisory working alliance, and social influence in supervision*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database. (Publication No. AAT 3046083)
- Juhnke, G. A. (1996). Solution-focused supervision: Promoting supervisee skills and confidence through successful solutions. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, *36*, 48–58.
- Kaplowitz, M. D., Hadlock, T. D., & Levine, R. (2004). A comparison of web and mail survey response rates. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 68, 94-101. doi:10.1093/poq/nfh006
- Koob, J. J. (2002). The effects of solution-focused supervision on the perceived self-efficacy of therapists in training. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 21, 161-183. doi:10.1300=J001v2n02_11
- Ladany, N., Ellis, M. V., & Friedlander, M. L. (1999). The supervisory working alliance, trainee self-efficacy, and satisfaction. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 77, 447-455.
- Ladany, N., Hill, C.E., Corbett, M.M., & Nutt, E.A. (1996). Nature, extent, and importance of what psychotherapy trainees do not disclose to their supervisors. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 43(1), 10-24.
- Ladany, N., Mori, Y., & Mehr, K. E. (2013). Effective and ineffective supervision. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 41(1), 28-47. doi: 10.1177/0011000012442648
- Ladany, N., & Walker, J. A. (2003). Supervisor self-disclosure: Balancing the uncontrollable narcissist with the indomitable altruist. *In Session: Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 59, 611-621.
- Lizzio, A., Stokes, L., & Wilson, K. (2005). Approaches to learning in professional supervision: Supervisee perceptions of process and outcome. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 27(3), 239-256.
- Mehr, K. E., Ladany, N., & Caskie, G. I. (2010). Trainee nondisclosure in supervision: What are they not telling you? *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 10(2), 103-113.
- Morgan, G. A., & Leech, N. L. (2006). SPSS for introductory statistics: Use and interpretation (3rd ed). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Norem, K., Magnuson, S., Wilcoxon, S. A., & Arbel, O. (2006). Supervisees' contributions to stellar supervision outcomes. *Journal of Professional Counseling Practice, Theory, & Research*, 34(1/2), 33.
- Omand, L. (2010). What makes for good supervision and whose responsibility is it anyway? *Psychodynamic Practice*, 16(4), 377 392.
- Pearson, Q. M. (2004). Getting the most out of clinical supervision: Strategies for mental health. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 26, 361-373.
- Reichelt, S., Gullestad, S. E., Hansen, B.R., Rønnestad, M. H., Torgersen, A. M., Jacobsen, C. H., Nielsen, G., H., & Skjerve, J. (2009). Nondisclosure in psychotherapy group supervision: The supervisee perspective. *Nordic Psychology*, 61(4), 5-27. doi:10.1027/1901-2276.61.3.5
- Santa Rita, E. (1996). The solution-focused supervision model for counselors teaching in the classroom. ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 393 524.
- Sklare, G. B. (1997). A solution-focused approach for school counselors. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Shulman, L. (2005). The clinical supervisor-practitioner working alliance: A parallel process. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 24, 23-47. doi:10.1300/J001v24n01_03
- Skjerve, J., Nielsen, G. H., Jacobsen, C. H., Gullestad, S. E., Hansen, B. R., Reichelt, S., Rønnestad, M. H., & Torgersen, A. M. (2009). Nondisclosure in psychotherapy group supervision: The supervisor perspective. *Nordic Psychology*, *61*(4), 28-48. doi:10.1027/1901-2276.61.3.28

- Spence, N., Fox, J. R. E., Golding, L., & Daiches, A. (2014). Supervisee self-disclosure: A Clinical Psychology Perspective. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 21, 178-192.
- Stark, M. D. (2015). Assessing counselor supervisee contribution. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Stoltenberg, C. D., & McNeill, B. W. (2010). IDM Supervision. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Stone, W. C. (1962). The success system that never fails: The amazing new concept that shows success can be reduced to a never-fail formula. London, England: Thorsons.
- Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors [TSBEPC]. (2014). *Title 22, Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 68*. Retrieved from http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/counselor/lpc_rules.shtm
- Thomas, F. (2012). Solution-focused supervision: A resource-oriented approach to developing clinical expertise. New York, NY: Springer.
- Vespia, K. M., Heckman-Stone, C., & Delworth, U. (2002). Describing and facilitating effective supervision behavior in counseling trainees. *Psychotherapy: Theory/Research/Practice/Training*, *39*, 56-65. doi:10.1037//0033-3204.39.1.56
- Walfish, S., McAlister, B., O'Donnell, P., Lambert, M. J. (2012). An investigation of self-assessment bias in mental health providers. Psychological Reports, 110(2), 639-644. doi: http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.2466/02.07.17.PR0.110.2.639-644
- Watkins, C. E. (2014). The supervisory alliance: A half century of theory, practice, and research in critical perspective. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 68(1), 19-55.
- Wilcoxon, S. A., Norem, K., Magnuson, S. (2005). Supervisees' contributions to lousy supervision outcomes. *Journal of Professional Counseling Practice, Theory, & Research*, 33(2), 31.

Author Note

This work was supported by a grant from the Texas Christian University Research and Creative Activities Fund. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Marcella Stark, Texas Christian University, College of Education, P.O. Box 297900, Fort Worth, Texas 76129.

Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Marcella Stark at m.stark@tcu.edu

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7729/81.1145

Using Song Lyrics to Enhance Counselor Trainee Perceptions of their Reflective Listening Skills

Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, Volume 8, Number 1, Spring 2016

Eric Davis, Jennifer Pereira

This qualitative study explored counseling student perceptions of the use of song lyrics to practice reflective listening skills. Student perceptions included reactions to a creative technique, increased confidence in reflective skills, applicability of skills, and potential issues with this activity. Results, implications for counselor education, and future research are explored.

Keywords: Song lyrics, Music, Facilitative skills, Experiential learning

The teaching and learning of counseling skills is both time and labor intensive (Ray, Jayne, & Miller, 2014). Counseling trainees must understand, learn, and apply numerous skills (e.g., paraphrasing, summarizing, confrontation, reflective responding) throughout their training work. These new skills then become the foundation for further learning of counseling theories, specific techniques, diagnosis, and treatment. It is imperative, therefore, that this initial acquisition of skills be successful, leaving counselor educators to present the material in innovative and meaningful ways (Furr & Carroll, 2003; Iarussi, Tyler, Littlebear, & Hinkie, 2013; Paladino, Barrio-Minton, & Kern, 2011). Research regarding these creative ways includes the use of movies and television as skill training tools (Koch & Dollarhide, 2000) and, to a lesser extent, music (Taub & Forney, 2004). Taub & Forney (2004) recommend the use of music from the standpoint of setting the atmosphere for learning or using particular lyrics to help students remember the stages of counseling.

The current study was designed to investigate the use of song lyrics and music as a potential tool to enhance student learning of reflective listening skills. In particular, this tool is being explored as a way to aid students in understanding the client's tone and affect, story and meaning, and further developing the in-depth process of reflective listening. The rationale for this study was drawn from the literature on experiential instructional modalities used to enhance basic counseling skills with counselors in training. The authors propose the use of music and song lyrics as a supplementary classroom tool based on the results of a qualitative study with students currently enrolled in a master's level counselor education program.

Pedagogy of Counseling Skills

Within the field of counselor education, literature and study on the pedagogy of basic counseling skills is paramount to understanding how we can best support the learning of counselors-in-training. Tang, Kathleen, Lasure-Bryant, & Norman (2004) assert that a primary mission of most graduate counselor education programs is training their students to be successful practitioners. In particular, facilitative listening skills have been found to have the highest prediction of outcome and this therapist characteristic "represents a quality of the therapist that impacts clinical outcomes" (Anderson, Ogles, Patterson, Lambert, & Vermeersch, 2009, p. 764). The discussions in the literature focused on pedagogy for counselors-in-training suggest that student counselor competency is enhanced in environments wherein counselor trainees are guided in developing critical thinking and therapeutic skills that are related to real-world counseling activities (Buser, 2008; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Iarussi et al., 2014; Tang, et. al., 2004). The ability of counselors to use appropriate therapeutic skills in real-life counseling settings is strongly influenced by their identification of specific skills and their ability to be confident in the use of those skills, thereby directly affecting the quality of counseling services provided (Ivey,

Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2010; Ray et al., 2014). Therefore, students may be best served when the pedagogy and curricula of counselor education programs seek to enhance skill acquisition, understanding, and application in novel and engaging ways that can appeal to a variety of learners.

There are numerous counselor-training models that provide focused attention to both reflective and action-oriented skill building, allowing counseling students to attain skill development in essential counseling skills and client awareness (Carkhuff, 1969; Ivey, Ivey & Zalaquett, 2010; McCauliffe, 2011). Empathy and active listening skills are crucial components of the counseling relationship (Carhuff, 2000; Ivey et. al., 2010; Ray et al., 2014; Rogers, 1986). In particular, clients who have worked with counselors who used reflective listening skills reported feelings of empowerment, satisfaction, and ability to make their own decisions, as well as feelings of a stronger therapeutic alliance with the counselor (Bogner, Horrocks, Lanni Manley, & Denig, 2012; Marmarosh & Kivlighan, 2012; Thompson & Hill, 1991). The field recognizes Roger's (1986) core conditions of empathy, unconditional positive regard, congruence, and the skill of empathic responding to be important foundational constructs for counselors-in-training to master (Gladding, 2006; Pereira & Smith, 2013). While these constructs are paramount, Nalavany, Ryan, Gomory, and Lacasse (2005) found that therapists rated facilitative listening skills as the most difficult to master during training. Furr and Carroll (2003) and Paladino et al. (2011) argue that counseling skill development begins in the earliest courses where students begin to identify their individual counseling style and manner of relating to others. These initial courses, such as an introductory counseling skills course, are often a student's first foray into using focused and purposeful communication skills in conversation with others rather than their typical day-to-day manner of building relationships and conversing. This

new knowledge can often be difficult for students to incorporate into their current schema, calling for innovative methods in teaching.

Experiential Modalities in Teaching Counseling Skills

The field of counselor education has been growing rapidly with regard to the inclusion of experiential modalities in the classroom such as role play, case studies, play based activities, art activities, gaming, and use of media (Smith, 2009; Swank, 2012; Taub & Forney, 2004; Villalba & Redmond, 2008; Ziff & Beamish, 2004). Additionally, there is writing on the effectiveness of using popular media to inform teaching as it relates to counseling skills (Stintchfield, 2008; Taub & Forney, 2004; Villalba & Redmond, 2008). The skills focused on basic counseling skills both in counselor education and related fields such as social work and student affairs and consist of: attending, reflective listening skills, paraphrasing, summarizing, therapeutic questioning, goal setting and action planning (Ivey et al., 2010; Ray et al., 2014; Taub & Forney, 2004). Currently, there are a number of training videotapes available that explore and display the counseling skills being taught to students in the classroom. These videos can be helpful supplements to the curriculum, as they provide additional examples of the specific components of a counseling interaction that bring the process to life for students, preparing them for role-plays and practice.

Researchers (Taub & Forney, 2004; Villalba & Redmond, 2008) demonstrated that popular media has many examples of feature films and television shows (e.g. *Good Will Hunting, Ordinary People, Quill, In Treatment, One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest*) that can be used to illustrate the process from the perspective of the counselor and client to aid students in becoming comfortable with, understand, and work with emotions. Films have also been used to support the understanding of group counseling, counseling theories (Koch & Dollarhide, 2000),

client issues, diagnosis, and mental illness. Similar to movies, popular music can be utilized to support a number of aspects of learning taking place in the classroom. The current use of music centers largely around setting the tone for the class, supporting the retention of information, forming connections between information and life experiences, understanding the stages of the therapeutic process, and assisting students with the self-reflection process (Baker & Krout, 2011; Koch & Dollarhide, 2000; Taub & Forney, 2004; Villalba & Redmond, 2008). Using music in this way helps to illustrate certain constructs being taught in the curriculum and can be used as a catalyst for discussion and role play (Taub & Forney, 2004). Often in counseling coursework such as multicultural competencies, skills, trauma, and counseling children and adolescents, students need some help adjusting to the content and tone of what they will be discussing and learning (Villalba & Redmond, 2008). Instructors can play music that tells a story about cultural issues (i.e. Rap), exemplifies trauma scenarios (i.e.: songs detailing abuse or domestic violence), and playing common children's songs can be helpful to remind students to be aware of the developmental differences they will encounter with young clients. Additionally, music can assist with helping students understand steps or constructs in theoretical models and the application of counseling skills (Taub & Forney, 2004). Within the complementary field of music therapy, music and lyrics are often used in the classroom to support deeper self-reflection while students are engaged in moving from theory to practice and applying skills to practice (Baker & Krout, 2011). This reflection is a crucial factor as it supports student integration of theory, research from the field, and skills based knowledge. The literature on music therapy also provides rich examples of how engaging in creative arts activities can enhance student development of clinical skills and higher levels of professional decision making (Baker & Krout, 2011; Shulman-Fagen, 2001).

A skill paramount to the rapeutic work with clients is reflective listening (Carhuff, 2000; Iarussi et al., 2014; Rogers, 1986). While there is limited research regarding the use of music as a method for introducing, understanding, and mastering the specific skill of reflective listening, there is literature in the music therapy field illustrating the use of music and lyrics for understanding emotional expression (Craig, 2009). The musical score of a song has the potential to assist students in feeling the emotion the artist is trying to convey, similar to when a counselor listens for the latent or unexpressed emotion felt by clients in a session. The use of lyrics may also assist students in understanding the underlying meaning of the story the artist is telling, the subtext, and the subplots, which is akin to listening for the underlying meaning in a client's retelling of their story. The current study aimed to mesh the power of music and lyrics to help counselors in training better hear the emotion, understand the deeper meaning of the story, and respond appropriately using the information gathered by exploring the following questions: What are counseling students' perceptions of the viability of using song lyrics as a technique in identifying emotional content through a classroom based learning activity? What are counseling students' perceptions of using song lyrics in enhancing their levels of confidence for identifying and understanding emotional content? What are counseling students' perceptions about using song lyrics in increasing counseling based reflective listening responses to emotional content?

Method

In this study, researchers used a constant comparative method and a thematic analysis to examine reflective feedback written by graduate students participating in an introductory counseling skills course. Thematic analysis is an inductive data driven approach to coding data into meaningful concepts or themes (Boyatzis, 1998). This approach was selected because it relies on the data to drive the formation of ideas and is consistent with a constructivist paradigm.

To code the data more systematically, a constant comparative method was used that includes open, axial, and selective coding (Patten, 2007; Potrato, 2010). A constant comparative process involves selecting a data set, developing data-driven codes, and applying the themes to the full data set to determine similarities and differences. The resulting codes were then analyzed for common themes related to the graduate students' experience.

Participants

A purposeful sample of 16 counselors-in-training from both the mental health counseling (11 students) and marriage and family therapy (5 students) concentrations (14 females; 2 males) served as participants. Participants were all enrolled in an introductory counseling skills course in the fall and spring offerings of the course during one academic year and taken at the beginning of the academic program at a southeastern university. Their ages ranged from 23-47 years of age with a mean age of 31 and of the 16 participants, five were African American, six were Caucasian, and five were Latino students. The small purposeful sample was not intended for generalization to a larger population. Rather, the intent of this study was to understand the experiences of a specific group of graduate students as they were immersed in a classroom-based learning activity. Participation in the study was not part of the overall grade in the introductory skills course and the student's participation in this study was completely voluntary. Thus, there was no actual or implied penalty in the students' performance in the introductory skills course for choosing not to participate in the study. Participants were assigned letters (A-J) to maintain confidentiality. The university's Institutional Review Board approved all aspects of the study and the researchers adhered to the ACA Code of Ethics regarding treatment of participants (American Counseling Association, 2014).

Procedures

The introductory counseling skills class met on site at the university and addressed a variety of basic counseling skills (i.e. reflective statements, summarizing, therapeutic questioning, paraphrasing, etc.). Because one of the most important underlying components of counseling is the ability to listen to a client's story and accurately understand the content, affect, and tone to allow for potential emotional insight to the situation, the researchers focused on reflective listening skills for this study (Ivey et al., 2010). Graduate students were expected to demonstrate their ability to listen to the song for aspects of tone, content, and affect to gain better awareness of the story and provide appropriate reflections that could potentially allow for insight into the client's issues.

The students were introduced to the basic components of reflective listening as part of the regular course curriculum immediately prior to engaging in the study. The course curriculum students engaged in for purposes of this study remained the same as what would be taught during the typical four-hour course meeting for that week utilizing the teaching, demonstration, and practice of reflective listening skills utilizing traditional methods (e.g. lecture, discussion, role play). The researchers wanted to assess the viability of this tool as a way to help students build mastery with the skills. Three assessment tools were utilized in the research study. These tools included a case study example, three songs with lyrics, and a reflective questionnaire for data collection. The purpose of each of these tools will be explained in the following paragraphs.

A case study was created from the lyrics of the first song "Pumped up Kicks" used in the study (See Appendix A, "Pumped Up Kicks" by Foster the People, 2010) to allow students to engage with a familiar teaching tool, and compare that with a new tool being explored. Case studies are commonly used in the classroom as a medium for presenting and addressing the

client's story (Harrawood, Mariska, & Hill, 2013; Keri, 2002). Students were asked to assess the case study as the first component of the research for client tone, affect, and content and to follow this with reflective listening statements. For the second component, which was musical, three songs were selected based on a variety of factors: Pumped Up Kicks (Foster, 2010) chosen for its content regarding a teen boy dealing with potential familial abuse and aggressive behavior tendencies toward schoolmates; Still (Grey, Ruzumna, Esses, & Blue, 2000) chosen for its treatment of domestic violence and drug abuse; All These Years (McAnally, 1992) chosen to illustrate the marriage and family counseling component of a couple in crisis related to infidelity. They provided diverse and emotionally driven stories that had potential for demonstration of the selected counseling skill of reflective listening. The songs also provided a mix of music, lyrics, and situations that could demonstrate the potential emotional aspects that clients may demonstrate in a session that either corroborate or mask the underlying emotion of the story. For example, the song could be utilizing upbeat music while the lyrics portray a lonely or aggressive story similar to a client who appears cheerful while describing a traumatic life event. This variety of song components provided a potentially more realistic experience for the students to listen to and for differences and similarities of common aspects of communication such as tone, content, and emotion seen in typical counseling sessions. Finally, the songs utilized crossed a range of genres thus allowing for exploration of culturally diverse music and situations similar to the array of clients and issues that students may work with during their future practices.

Following the case study activity, the remainder of the study was conducted in three stages for each of the three songs. The participants listened to the first song and wrote their notes concerning the tone, content, and affect noted in the song on a sheet with columns for tone, content, and affect. Then the participants received the lyrics to the song and listened again

adding to their notes. Then they listened to the song again that was paused at intervals to record their reflections to address the emotional content detected in the song lyrics. The participants and researchers then processed the notes and reflective statements. This process was repeated for the next two songs.

Data Collection

Following the completion of the activity, the counseling students responded in writing to four open-ended reflection questions regarding their perceptions of the experience. The open-ended questionnaires were designed to help the researchers understand the context in which the participant perceived the experience. For example, in order to better understand how counselors-in-training constructed their song lyric learning experiences, participants were invited to reflect on their perceptions of using the experience to identify emotional content, enhancing their confidence in identifying emotional content, and increasing counseling based responses to emotional content. Items similar to the reflection questions included in this study have been proposed as appropriate ways to assist participants in deeply processing their experiences in the study (Patten, 2007). Sixteen reflection questionnaires were collected for data analysis. Each questionnaire included the following questions:

- a. What is your perception of the viability of this technique in identifying emotional content in song lyrics?
- b. What is your perception of the training tool in enhancing your level of confidence for identifying emotional content?
- c. What are your perceptions about this training tool in increasing counseling based responses to emotional content?
- d. Do you have any additional comments regarding this experience?

Data Analysis

The reflective questionnaires written by the counselors-in-training were collected and examined using a thematic analysis. Categories derived from a thematic analysis are intended to provide an in-depth picture of the collective experience of the participants and to describe the meaning of their own reflections rather than to provide an over-arching explanation of the process (Aronson, 1994; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Grbich, 2007). In this study, constant comparative methods were used to give structure to the coding process.

In qualitative research, researchers completely immerse themselves in the data by constantly reviewing the materials as themes emerge (Potrata, 2010). For this early coding process, the two researchers first reviewed and coded the questionnaires independently, using an open coding procedure to examine the questionnaires for distinct segments and sort them into categories that emerged (Grbich, 2007; LaRossa, 2005). Subsequently, the researchers met to discuss axial coding of the data and organized six categories, and several sub-categories that described common themes that emerged from the open coding. Finally, the researchers identified four over-arching categories that related most to the research questions. The researchers met multiple times to compare coding results, examine the themes against the original data, negotiate their applicability, and revise the categories when necessary.

Member checking was used in this study as a measure of the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data analysis (Patten, 2007). Eight participants contacted by email responded and were provided findings of the data analysis to review and offer any additional feedback, information, or questions. They used the following questions to guide this review: 1) Generally, do these findings fit with your song lyrics experience? 2) Is there anything in the

results that does not seem accurate to you? 3) Is there anything that seems particularly accurate to you? The students all indicated that the data analysis results fit with their experiences.

Results

Results of the data analysis produced four overarching categories addressing the participants' perceptions of the song lyric training tool experience. Each category is discussed below, including themes and quotes that illustrate the students' experiences in this basic active listening skills training opportunity. Note that no students are identified by name to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Creative and Useful Method

Participants noted the creative, fun, and useful aspects of this novel training tool utilizing music and song lyrics to teach basic active listening skills related to emotional content. This finding is significant considering the fact that proper identification of emotional content can aid in a more authentic process of counseling (Ray et al., 2014). Students appreciated the idea of utilizing the popular media form of music to learn about active listening skills due to their personal connections to songs. As participant E stated, "For me, it is much easier to connect to a song than a written or verbal story" and "music connects the emotions much more than a written or verbal word and it can be used in many different ways." A majority of the participants also noted the expansive potential of this new teaching tool to enhance the existing methods used in training counseling students in basic attending skills. For example, participant D shared, "I think listening to emotional content in song lyrics is a creative and useful tool to broaden the spectrum of tools used to understand clients and their stories." These statements reflect the desire of the participants to utilize creative methods for learning these basic counseling skills, as well as the potential for applying them for their future work with clients.

Students also discussed the prospective applicability of this teaching tool beyond the parameters of this brief study. For example, participant K remarked, "I think this would be effective. I appreciate the teaching piece that I know could be expanded in a full class." Participant E made the comment that she would like to "do more with music both in school and in practice." The participants also noted the possible utilization of the teaching tool outside of the traditional classroom setting. Participant M noted, "it is something I could use daily when not in class." Participants A and L shared that they plan to "use this at home to improve my ability to actively listen and reflect" and to "constantly be practicing my skill sets." Further, participants noted the applicability of this tool as a safe means of practicing these skills before meeting with clients. Participant N said "I feel more confidence...this is an exercise I can practice at home instead of having to wait for a client to practice on" and "without hesitation or fear of being wrong" thus addressing the common theme of anxiety often seen in counseling students during their training of basic counseling skills. This was also documented in one participant noting, "It shows future therapists different ways to identify important cues used to understand and later reflect the clients' problem/story." These statements suggest that the participants in this specific study desire a creative teaching activity to enhance the learning environment, as well as a portable means of practicing active listening skills beyond the classroom setting which has the potential for increased engagement and significant learning (Buser, 2008; Koch & Dollarhide, 2000).

Enhancement of Confidence in Active Listening and Reflecting Skills

Participants described the development of active listening and reflecting skills that many instructors would consider essential to quality professional counseling abilities. In particular, a majority of the students identified the positive experiences they had during the implementation

of this training tool and the increase in their level of confidence in identifying emotional content, which is paramount in active listening and reflection (Anderson et al., 2009; Gladding, 2006; Pereira & Smith, 2013). Students commented on aspects of their increased confidence including the identification of feelings, enhanced ability to note emotions beyond the lyrics of the songs, and ability to develop appropriate reflective responses.

Participant C confirmed the ability to identify feelings by stating, "My confidence level increased because I now feel like I know what I should be looking for, how to identify cues, and how to interpret them and utilize them." Participant J noted, "this approach to learning made the process much easier to comprehend and better able to identify emotional issues." Participants identified the usefulness of this training tool in addressing emotional content than traditional training methods. For example, participant E said, "I was able to connect and identify much better to the emotional content using the music and song lyrics than I was with a case study" while participant O stated this tool provided "tangible examples of how to bring the story's meaning out of the emotions." Participant D added, "My responses are now going to be more geared towards emotional content because that is where the important information hides." One explanation for this is how creative teaching tools like music and song lyrics add an emotional depth that may not be present in a role-play or case study (Taub & Forney, 2004).

Meeting the need for more realistic and effective learning strategies to address emotional content in effective counselor training was a common theme. The participants documented the importance of addressing tone and content by noting increased confidence in the ability to identify emotional content beyond simply using the lyrics of the song. As participant A stated, "Being able to identify the emotional content allows for further opportunities to respond to the client, to feeling the emotion with music itself." The same participant also stated "the tone and

affect allowed me to open my mind further in order to not become as biased by the lyrics along." The ability to go beyond the lyrics for insight and information was demonstrated by participant G who stated, "This tool was helpful in learning how to look for emotional content in dealing with clients. Otherwise, I may have gotten caught up in just the lyrics." Participant O commented, "Once you get beyond understanding that you are actually looking for each category (i.e. tone, content, affect), the reflective piece becomes much easier to develop."

Students also discussed the need this teaching tool addressed in utilizing their understanding of the emotional content to make appropriate reflective responses. For example, participant K made the comment that "I found this to be an effective tool in identifying pieces we will use in summaries and while we put together reflective pieces." Participant M also stated, "I feel this could be a very valuable tool for increasing counseling based responses to emotional content." It was also noted that this tool may enhance the learning experience by allowing the "emotion and story stand out" and it "almost leads you to various counseling based responses." These statements suggest that participants noticed an enhanced ability to identify emotional content as well as developing potential reflective responses with this teaching tool. This applicability of the active listening skills was another area that surfaced in the data analysis as a separate category.

Applicability of Active Listening and Reflective Skills

The ability of the participants to move beyond self-reported improved confidence in identifying emotional content to the application of the skills for conceptualization and reflective responses is paramount, as a primary goal of counseling skills training is to learn how to utilize the skills appropriately (Lee & Prior, 2013). For example, one participant E documented, "I really liked writing out the tone, content, affect...it helped me with my reflective statements."

Participant B also noted the experience showed that "emotions are a strong trigger" and the importance of listening for the "underlying message" in order to "get the whole picture and help them [clients] that much more."

Another important application of this training tool noted involved identifying potential incongruence between the content and emotion of a person's story. This was conveyed in participant I's statement that the training tool could be "helpful in preparing [counselors] for difficult sessions in which tone and affect don't match the story." Participant H exemplified this by saying, "I feel that this is something that is useful in counseling because you never know what we are going to get." While this training tool may have potential to address such difficulties for counselors-in-training, a series of themes related to potential issues with the tool also were observed.

Potential Difficulties with the Training Tool

As with any approach to learning, there are potential issues concerning the understanding and application of the techniques being taught (Iarussi et al., 2013). Participants noted a variety of factors that could interfere with this method for teaching active listening skills to counselors in training. These factors included clarity of the music and lyrics, familiarity or lack of familiarity/interest in music, and clarity of the instruction and concept.

Utilizing techniques such a music and song lyrics can potentially provide a more realistic picture of a client and verbal interactions these students may encounter (Koch & Dollarhide, 2000; Taub & Forney, 2004). For example, clients may present with a speech impediment, rapid speech, or low volume that could be difficult to understand, especially for students who may have a hearing problem. Some of the songs selected presented these examples and provided an area of difficulty for the participants. As participant A stated, "It was somewhat difficult to hear

the lyrics." Another participant (C) noted that "it is important to combine the song lyrics with the music for clarity" and participant P stated a need for a "visual piece" to make the experience more effective. The tool does also provide a safe space to practice dealing with speech and hearing issues rather than working directly with a client or peer. Similarly, familiarity with a certain client issue or counseling area could influence interactions.

Some of the participants documented their apprehension for this approach as it related to familiarity to the medium of music and certain songs. For example, participant F observed, "I do not know how effective it would be for a person who does not relate to music." The same participant also noted that it "may make a difference if person/class already knows the song." Participant E also expressed concern that "not all people are into music" and therefore may not be as engaged in this learning tool.

The need for continued practice to fully gain a solid foundation for this new teaching tool was another area that surfaced. Participant C documented this by stating, "I need more practice to better understand the total concept." Participant J added that "without more practice" elaborating on the potential for increasing counseling based responses was not possible. These results are not unexpected considering the need for more training with a new teaching approach (Paladino et al., 2011; Ray et al., 2014). There was also evidence of potential for this approach in enhancing confidence in identifying emotional content. As participant A said, "I believe that this is a tool that has enhanced my confidence and could continue to enhance my confidence with more practice."

Additionally, there is a potential issue with student's personal issues being brought to the surface or highlighted by specific lyrical content. Students may react emotionally to the lyrics being used due to their own life history and experiences causing them distress and the instructor

may need to process the content with the class as a whole or privately with specific individuals. This processing can also be an opportunity to help students to understand the transference and countertransference that can take place during a session.

Discussion

The teaching, development, and application of active listening skills and reflective statements can be a daunting task for both counselors-in-training and counselor educators (Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2010). As demonstrated by participant reports, through the use of a novel and creative tool, the process for learning these skills can be enhanced. The use of music and song lyrics for teaching active listening skills, according to participants, allowed for deeper understanding and connection to the emotional content of the practice experience. Further, we identified a majority of the students' eagerness to utilize this approach in class, but also for personal practice. This willingness to practice these skills beyond the traditional classroom setting identifies the need expressed by counselors-in-training and the profession to learn and hone the counseling skills needed for proper connection to client emotional content for depth, understanding, and progress in counseling (Anderson, et al., 2009; Iarussi et al., 2013; Ivey et al., 2007).

Creative methods for counselor training have been shown to be effective in the development of a variety of skills such as empathy and reflective listening (Iarussi et al., 2013; Villalba & Redmond, 2008). For a majority of the participants, using music and lyrics provided an experience that assisted in the development of several counseling skills. The students identified how the experience helped them understand emotional content in a more authentic and substantive manner and better conceptualize the client story without focusing solely on the content of the words or lyrics. The tone and effect added by the music allowed participants to

48

focus beyond just the words to the underlying emotions expressed by the singer. This conceptualization provided participants with a better ability to express reflective statements that relate to the emotional content in a more genuine and consequential manner. This is an important aspect of the counseling relationship (Gladding, 2006; Pereira & Smith, 2013; Ray et al., 2014; Rogers, 1989).

Apart from the recognition of this teaching tool as a creative means for enhancing and applying active listening and reflective statements, an important aspect was the increased confidence noted by the participants in developing these skills. The need for successful learning and application of counseling skills is critical for counselors-in-training (Anderson et al., 2009). The participants' increased confidence led to a greater understanding of paying attention to all aspects of clients' stories. This can help participants gain insight into the depth of the emotions present and utilize reflective listening to connect with clients.

Limitations

Because the goal of the qualitative research methodology employed in this study was to provide an in-depth examination of the participants' personal experiences, generalizability may be more limited when applied to similar populations. Due to the universality of teaching reflective listening skills and the growth of creative teaching modalities in the field, there is potential for this technique as a viable tool for teaching these skills. Additionally, the outcomes of this study may be limited because the data was collected solely from a subset of graduate students enrolled in a course at a small university. Social desirability bias may have been present due to the lack of additional data sources (e.g. interviews, visual data, observations, etc.) and the students' awareness that the researchers were faculty members of the university and would review the questionnaires and conduct the member checking. Another area of concern that arose

during the study was the need to be aware of and address any potential ADA 504 issues (e.g. hearing difficulties) students may have, and how that could affect the use of this technique in the classroom. Future studies may consider including multiple measures of graduate students' outcomes with a more diverse and larger sample size. Other basic counseling skills beyond active listening and reflective statements (e.g. summarizing, tracking, questioning, etc.) could be explored for a greater comprehension of the applicability of this creative training tool.

Implications and Recommendations for Research

The findings of this study have a number of implications for use in counselor education, particularly a skills training course. Results suggest that this technique could potentially be an effective and creative way to learn and practice reflective listening skills with counselors-intraining. This technique assists the counselor educator in moving away from more traditional and prescribed methods for teaching counseling skills for student mastery. Counselors-intraining who respond positively to experiential methods may find this method engaging, may participate more fully in class based activities, and seek additional creative methods for sharing and displaying their own knowledge. As a long-range implication, it is possible that by being instructed through experiential and creative methods in the classroom, counselors-in-training are being introduced to the idea of freedom to be creative in the techniques and approaches they use with clients in the field.

This technique has the potential to be utilized in other counseling coursework as a creative means for addressing specific topics. Future research could include expanding this concept to other areas of counselor pedagogy. For example, research could provide an in-depth look at how students understand and process the learning of diagnostic categories, multicultural issues, and theoretical conceptualization. The malleability of the technique lends itself to

working with a number of other courses that frequently use case studies and role-plays as the primary methods for providing examples to students. The identification of diagnostic issues and symptomology displayed by clients, ethical issues, couple and family concerns, assisting students in identifying client concerns through the lens of a particular theoretical orientation, multicultural awareness and working with clients of diverse backgrounds, could all be viable coursework options in which this technique may prove effective.

Conclusion

Using music and lyrics as an experiential teaching tool represents a promising technique for assisting counselors-in-training in understanding at a deeper level the process of reflective listening. The technique was found to be effective, creative, adaptable, and engaging for students. This is a tool that raised counselor-in-training competence for understanding and working with reflective listening skills and can be used in additional courses to engage students with material.

References

- Anderson, T., Ogles, B. M., Patterson, C. L., Lambert, M. J., & Vermeersch, D. A. (2009). Therapist effects: Facilitative interpersonal skills as a predictor of therapist success. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 65, 755-768. doi:10.1002/jclp.20583
- Arronson, J. (1994). A pragmatic view of thematic analysis. The Qualitative Report, 2, 20-22.
- Baker, F., & Krout, R. E. (2011). Collaborative peer lyric writing during music therapy training: A tool for facilitating students' reflections about clinical practicum experiences. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 20(1), 62-89. doi:10.1080/08098131.2010.486132
- Bogner, R. G., Horrocks, S. L., Lanni Manley, E. J., & Denig, S. J. (2012). Educating counselors: A Constructivist approach to the development of core counseling skills. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, *3*, 1-8.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information, thematic analysis, and code development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Braun, V. & Clark, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research* in *Psychology 3*, 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Buser, T. J. (2008). Counselor training: Empirical findings and current approaches. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, 48(2), 86-100. doi: 10.1002/j.1556-6978.2008.tb00065.x
- Carkhuff, R. R. (1969). *Helping and human relations: A primer for lay and professional helpers.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Carkhuff, R. (2000). The art of helping (8th ed.). Amherst, MA: HRD Press.
- Craig, D. (2009). Exploring music preference: Meaningfulness of music as a function of emotional reactions. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 18(1), 57-69. doi:10.1080/08098130802697137
- Crotty, M. (2003). *The foundation of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Docherty, S., & Sandelowski, M. (1999). Interviewing children. *Research in Nursing and Health*, 22, 177-185. doi: 10.1002//(SICI)1098-240X(199904)22:2<177::AID-NUR9>3.0.CO;2-H
- Foster, M. (2010). Pumped Up Kicks. On *Foster the People* [CD]. Los Angeles CA: Columbia Startime. (2009).
- Furr, S. R., & Carroll, J. J. (2003). Critical incidents in student counselor development. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 81, 483-489. doi: 10.1002/j.1556-6678.2003.tb00275.x
- Gladding, S., T. (2006). *The counseling dictionary: Concise definitions of frequently used terms* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Grbich, C. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Grey, M., Ruzumna, J., Esses, B., & Blue, J. (2000). Still [Recorded by Macy Grey]. On *On How Life Is* [CD]. New York, NY: Epic Records.
- Harrawood, L. K., Mariska, M. A., & Hill, N. R. (2013). Use of autobiographies to teach concepts in addiction: A narrative approach to instruction. *Journal Of Creativity In Mental Health*, 8(4), 470-482. doi:10.1080/15401383.2013.852445
- Iarussi, M. H., Tyler, J. M., Littlebear, S., & Hinkie, M. S. (2013). Integrating motivational interviewing into a basic counseling skills course to enhance counseling self-efficacy. *The Professional Counselor*, *3*, 161-174.

- Ivey, A. E., Ivey, M. B., & Zalaquett, C. P. (2010). *Intentional interviewing and counseling:* Facilitating client development in a multicultural society (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Kerl, S. (2002). Using narrative approaches to teach multicultural counseling. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development*, 30(2), 135. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-1912.2002.tb00485.x
- Koch, G., & Dollarhide, C.T. (2000). Using a popular film in counselor education: *Good Will Hunting* as a teaching tool. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *39*, 203-210. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2000.tb01232.x
- LaRossa, R. (2005), Grounded theory methods and qualitative family research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 837–857. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2005.00179.x
- Lee, B., & Prior, S. (2013). Developing therapeutic listening. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 41(2), 91-104. doi:10.1080/03069885.2012.705816
- Marmarosh, C. L., & Kivlighan, D. M., Jr. (2012). Relationships among client and counselor agreement about the working alliance, session evaluations, and change in client symptoms using response surface analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 59(3), 352-367. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0028907
- McAnally, M. (1992). All These Years [Recorded by Sawyer Brown]. On *Live and Learn* [CD]. Nashville, TN: Curb Records.
- McAuliffe, G. M. (2011). Deep learning. In G. M. McAuliffe & K. Eriksen (Eds.). *Handbook of counselor preparation: Constructivist, developmental, and experiential approaches.*Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nalavany, B. A., Ryan, S. D., Gomory, T., & Lacasse, J. R. (2005). Mapping the characteristics of a 'good' play therapist. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, *14*, 27-50.doi:10.1037/h0088895
- Nelson, M. L., & Neufeldt, S. A. (1998). The pedagogy of counseling: A critical examination. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 38, 70-89. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.1998.tb00560.x
- Paladino, D. A., Barrio Minton, C. A., & Kern, C. W. (2011). Interactive training model: Enhancing beginning counseling student development. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *50*(3), 189-206. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2011.tb00119.x
- Patten, M. L. (2007). *Understanding research methods: An overview of the essentials* (6th ed.). Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.
- Pereira, J. K. & Smith-Adcock, S. (2013). The effects of a training on school counselor trainee's attitudes, knowledge, and skills, and self-estimate of ability. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 22(3), 129-142. doi: 10.1037/a0033388
- Potrata, B. (2010). Rethinking the ethical boundaries of a grounded theory approach. *Research Ethics*, 6, 154-158. doi: 10.1177/174701611000600408
- Ray, D. C., Jayne, K. M, & Miller, R. M. (2014). Master counselors as teachers: Clinical practices of counselor educators. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, *36*, 78-93.
- Rogers Carl R. (1986). A client-centered/person-centered approach to therapy. *Psychotherapist's Casebook: Theory and Technique in the Practice of Modern Times*. Ed. I. L Kutash and A. Wolf. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Shulman-Fagen, T. (2001). The creative arts in group supervision. In M. Forinash (Ed.), *Music therapy supervision* (pp. 149–160). Gilsum, NH: Barcelona.

- Smith, A. L. (2009). Role play in counselor education and supervision: Innovative ideas, gaps, and future directions. *Journal Of Creativity In Mental Health*, 4(2), 124-138. doi:10.1080/15401380902945194
- Spruill, D. A., & Benshoff, J. M. (2000). Helping beginning counselors develop a personal theory of counseling. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 40, 70-80. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2000.tb01800.x
- Stinchfield, T. A. (2006). Using popular films to teach systems thinking. *Family Journal*, *14*(2), 123-128. doi:10.1177/1066480705285559
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage Publications.
- Swank, J. M. (2012). Using games to creatively enhance the counselor education curriculum. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 7(4), 397-409. doi:10.1080/15401383.2012.740365
- Tang, M., Addison, K. D., Lasure-Bryant, D., Norman, R., O'Connell, W., & Stewart-Sicking, J. A. (2004). Factors that influence self-efficacy of counseling students: An exploratory study. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 44,* 70-80. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2004.tb01861.x
- Taub, D., & Forney, D. (2004). Using entertainment media to inform student affairs teaching and practice related to counseling skills. New Directions for Student Services, 108, 71-81. doi:10.1002/ss.143
- Thompson, B. J., & Hill, C. E. (1991). Therapist perceptions of client reactions. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 69(3), 261.
- Tudor, K., & Merry, T. (2002). *Dictionary of person-centered psychology*. London, England: Whurr Publishers.
- Villalba, J. A., & Redmond, R. E. (2008). *Crash*: Using a popular film as an experiential learning activity in a multicultural counseling course. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 47, 264-276. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2008.tb00056.x
- Ziff, K. K., & Beamish, P. M. (2004). Teaching a course on the arts and counseling: Experiential learning in counselor education. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, 44(2), 147-159.

APPENDIX A

Client Case: As adapted from the song "Pumped Up Kicks", Foster the People (2010)

Robert is a 17 year old high school student. He comes to your office brought by his mother who states that Robert is "having great difficulty in school and with his friends but he won't let us do anything to help, he won't talk to me – he shuts me out"

In meeting with Robert you notice that he puts on a "cool" or "tough guy" act in your office. However, he appears to be a very quiet, introspective boy. Robert tells you there is no reason he needs to talk to you, that he "doesn't like school, it's for losers", and that he "doesn't care that he doesn't have very many friends" in school "the school is a joke anyway". He has two boys that he spends time with who also sound to be outside the "regular" group of 11th graders. His mother reports that other than spending those two boys, Robert spends time alone in his room.

Robert is reluctant to talk about the bullying that his mother reports, saying "it's not a big deal – jocks are always jerks everyone knows that" while pounding on his chair. You can see that he is becoming agitated and he asks if he can smoke in your office. To your comment about his agitation Robert looks down and away and informs you with a shrug that the bullying isn't a big deal and he's "a lot tougher" than he looks. He states that people underestimate him, but "what goes around comes around eventually", again said with gestured emphasis. Following this statement Robert laughs to himself briefly. He then states that his friends get picked on too sometimes, but they're a group and they "look out for each other". Robert reinforces that he prefers to be alone.

Robert reports that his mom is a "worrier and a hoverer" and that she is "always on him about something". Roberts father is rarely home due to the long hours he works and Robert

reports that he is "a really tough guy – he's a man's man". Robert also states that he feels he is

just like his father and particularly likes that his father "doesn't take any crap from anyone – this

makes people respect him more". Robert's mother reports some relationship issues between

herself and her husband, and states that Roberts father doesn't make much time for Robert.

When asked about his relationship with his father Robert looks down and then out the window

for several minutes. He then asks if his time is up.

Author Note

Eric Davis: University of Nebraska Kearney Jennifer Pereira: Arizona State University

Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Eric Davis at davises@unk.edu

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7729/81.1066

Intentional Work Group Experiences: A Pedagogical Tool for Counselor Educators

Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, Volume 8, Number 1, Spring 2016

Brian Hutchison, Melissa Odegard-Koester, Rebecca Koltz

Work groups "promote efficient and effective accomplishment of group tasks among people who are gathered to accomplish group goals" (ASGW, 2000, p. 3). Due to the prevalence of use in actual counseling settings, counselor educators frequently use work groups as a pedagogical tool in educating counselors-in-training. This article introduces a classroom intervention designed to help counseling students develop self-awareness and skills pertaining to participating in work groups. Using constructivist pedagogy as our theoretical basis we will describe the intervention and the qualitative approach we incorporated to evaluate the intervention's impact in the classroom. Results and discussion including contextualization, limitations, implications, and suggestions for future research will follow in the remainder of this article.

Keywords: Work groups, counselor training, constructivist pedagogy

Case consultations, psychoeducational curriculum development, advocacy and community engagement plans, grant proposals, and interagency collaborations are just a few reasons groups of counselors convene for non-therapeutic purposes. The Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW, 2000) identifies four types of groups that are relevant to the practice of counseling: work groups, groups for psychoeducation, group counseling, and group psychotherapy. Each group has different objectives and therefore different dynamics that require specialized skills when counselors participate in each. Work groups "promote efficient and effective accomplishment of group tasks among people who are gathered to accomplish group goals" (ASGW, 2000, p. 3). Effective work groups require team members who have developed skills in the areas of collaborative: (1) communication, (2) goal setting, (3) planning and task coordination, (4) and conflict resolution (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Sundstrom, 1999; Stevens & Campion, 1994).

Work groups are highly interdependent. The overall performance of a work group is unattainable without contributions from each group member as well as successful interactions between members (Marks et al., 2002). These interactions include: communication, goal setting, and planning and task coordination. Communication refers to group members' capacity to understand and exchange information in a collaborative manner that enhances sharing networks and thus the attainment of task outcomes (Stevens & Campion, 1994). Goal setting is important in that developing objectives collaboratively allows the group as a whole to know what is to be accomplished and when the work is completed. Planning and task coordination uses communication to agree on the most effective ways to sequence and orchestrate activities designed to accomplish the group's goals (Sundstrom, 1999). Inevitably conflicts will arise within the work group process. Conflict resolution strategies that address both the needs of the individual and concern for other group members include: (1) problem-solving, (2) obliging, (3) dominating, (4) avoiding, and (5) compromising. While not all strategies listed are effective in moving a work group towards goal attainment, the predication of a member's conflict resolution strategy is complex. Most often, issues such as type of conflict, personal style, and feelings of safety and belonging within the group influence any member's given strategy (Einarsen et al., 2003).

Regardless of your professional counseling identity, you will find opportunities to engage in a work group. For example, professional school counselors will often participate in work groups such as Individual Education Planning teams, school counseling curriculum teams, and 504 committees. Likewise, community/mental health counselors find themselves working in groups with both internal (e.g., designing interventions, writing grants) and external (e.g., interagency collaborations for financial development, access to client groups, multisite

interventions) constituents. The list of work group activities continues for rehabilitation, career, college, marriage & family, and other counseling modalities. Therefore learning how to navigate work groups is an important skill for counselors-in-training to acquire.

Mirroring the prevalence of work groups in the practice of counseling, counselor educators frequently use work groups (e.g., group projects, papers and advocacy actions) as a pedagogical tool in educating counselors-in-training (Lara, Pope, & Minor, 2011; Pope, Coker, & Pangelinan, 2011). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP; 2005) identifies four distinct professional identity standards related to work groups. These standards include strategies for interagency and inter-organization collaboration and communications (II.G.1.b); roles and responsibilities as members of interdisciplinary emergency management teams (II.G.1.c); roles and processes of advocacy (II.G.1.h); and advocacy processes needed to address institutional barriers that impede access, equity, and success of clients (II.G.1.i). However, a thorough review of the counseling literature using the key terms work groups and task groups coupled with the terms teaching, counselor education, and pedagogy revealed no counseling classroom interventions designed specifically to teach work group skill development.

This classroom intervention is designed to help counseling students develop self-awareness and skills pertaining to participating in work groups. The intention was to help students develop work group skills such as collaborative communication, goal setting, planning and task coordination, and conflict resolution (Einarsen et al., 2003; Sundstrom, 1999; Stevens & Campion, 1994). To meet this goal the first and second authors identified two essential elements of the intervention. First, students needed a lexicon by which they could share personal reflections upon their tendencies or styles (i.e., attentional and interpersonal aptitudes and biases)

while working in groups. Second, students would require aids that allowed for self-reflection and safe dissemination of feedback regarding their styles from peers and the course instructor. Using constructivist pedagogy as the theoretical basis for the intervention and the qualitative approach, we incorporated constructivist pedagogy to evaluate the intervention's impact in the classroom.

Constructivist Pedagogy

The definition of constructivist pedagogy has been debated for several decades with little consensus and many instances of myopic focus within individual academic disciplines (Davis & Sumara, 2003; Richardson, 2003). One general definition that incorporates an individual psychological perspective on teaching and learning is offered below.

Constructivist pedagogy has been thought of as the creation of classroom environments, activities, and methods that are grounded in a constructivist theory of learning, with goals that focus on individual students developing deep understandings in the subject matter of interest and habits of mind that aid in future learning. (Richardson, 2003, p.1627).

In constructivist pedagogy, the objective is to develop knowledge by beginning with the students' internal world as it interacts with the external world (Walters, 1994). One hallmark of this educational perspective is the efficacy of encouraging students to approach realistic dilemmas from a stance of reflection, self-monitoring, and cognitively complex problem solving. The benefits of a constructivist stance for counselors-in-training include accelerated skill development (Nelson & Neufelft, 1998; Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007) and increased confidence in the performance of counselor related tasks (Tang et al., 2004).

This approach to pedagogy blends well with theoretical approaches to experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Piaget, 1970). For example, Kolb's Four Stage Learning Cycle describes four sequential yet repeating stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract

conceptualization, and active experimentation before repeating the cycle. Concrete experience is action-oriented, allowing the knowing subject to gain knowledge from direct interaction with the object of knowing. Reflective observation involves contemplative thought on the concrete experience that leads to personal meaning making. Abstract generalization is the process by which the knowing subject modifies existing rules and theories, or constructs entirely new ones, pertaining to his or her interaction with the object of knowing. Finally, active experimentation is the testing of the modified, or new, rules and theories leading to more efficacious behaviors, improved feelings of self-efficacy, and skill development.

Utilizing the constructivist approach to education, the participants in this study were Master's level counselor education students enrolled in one of three counseling courses. The object of inquiry is the work group process. The objective of the intervention is to allow students to more effectively engage with the work group towards the goal of improved effectiveness as counselors and advocates.

Intervention Description

The intervention was included as an assignment in three counselor education courses, two taught by the first author (i.e., Group Procedures in Counseling, and Career Development and Counseling) and one by the second author (i.e., Crisis Intervention and Consultation). While all enrolled students completed all parts of the assignment, data was used for only those who chose to participate. The assignments were comparable. Students in all three courses were given the task of identifying target client group/issue, had almost identical course time reserved for group meetings, had comparable group assignments, earned equivalent points as a percentage of their overall grade for the course, and followed the same timeline for data collection. The only

requirement between the universities was the assignment in the courses stated above had to have a group component so the work group experience of the participants could be examined.

A PowerPoint presentation consisting of ten slides was used by both instructors to introduce the group work assignment. The purpose of the assignment was put in context using the 2009 CACREP Standards that applied to work groups. Next, the concept of feedback loops and their use in counseling was introduced using the examples of Johari's Window (Hase, Davies, & Dick, 1999) and Interpersonal Process Recall (Bernard, 1989). Instructors then led a discussion on the important components of effective feedback loops. Common language used by both givers and receivers of feedback was essential for clear understanding and the ability to incorporate feedback into their group work practice.

The Test of Attentional and Interpersonal Style (TAIS; Nideffer, 1976) was chosen as a framework for providing feedback within the work groups. The TAIS is designed to improve performance in social situations by identifying the environmental and interpersonal situations that increase a respondent's emotional arousal. TAIS was chosen because it provides descriptive language of personal styles that influence the way one performs necessary work group tasks (e.g., communication, goal setting, planning and task coordination, and conflict resolution).

The four quadrants delineated in the TAIS were identified and labeled with the descriptors: Observer, Deliverer, Creator, and Problem Solver. The designation observer describes Nideffer's (1976) upper left quadrant broad/external and is someone who rapidly assesses their surroundings, has good street sense, and anticipates reactions from others. Deliverers fit in the upper right quadrant narrow/external and are adept at implementing programs, taking action, and being focused on delivering. Creators represent the lower left quadrant broad/internal and describe those who prefer to analyze and plan, develop goals and

organize processes, and learn from the past to predict the future. Finally, problem solvers systematically rehearse their course of actions, wish to solve problems, and incorporate logical thought processes.

A one-page feedback form (See Appendix A) was used to gather feedback about individual group performance. All group members were asked to rate both themselves and their fellow group members at specific points in the work group process. The feedback form was comprised of seven items. Items one through four asked the respondent to rate each group member on their demonstration of behaviors consistent with each of the four TAIS styles (observer, deliverer, creator, and problem solver) with 0 representing no behaviors demonstrated and 4 representing consistent and effective demonstration of each behavior while working in the group. Question five asked the respondent to guess how many hours each group member worked on the project outside of the group meetings. Question six asked how each group member contributed to the assigned task. Finally, question seven asked how easy each group member was to work with during the project.

Forms were completed at three different points during the group project time span. The first round of feedback was considered a baseline completed only by the individual about himself or herself. For round two, each group member completed a feedback form about himself or herself and each member of the work group. The form was completed a third time by each group member about himself or herself and each member of the work group. Each group member received a summary report of the responses after time two and time three. The summary reports presented each student with an individual assessment of themselves and then summaries of their peers including averages of the ratings on the four style questions and the projected number of hours worked outside the group. Responses to question six and seven were presented as a

narrative list with the subject's own response bolded. Students were asked to compare and reflect upon the similarities and differences between their self-assessment and that of their peer group members.

The culminating assignment for the process was a reflection paper. Students were asked to answer the following prompts:

- 1. What was the process like for you?
- 2. Identify the areas where your self-perception matched that of your peers.
- 3. Identify the areas where your self-perception did not match that of your peers.
- 4. As a result of this process:
- a. What will you continue to do the same when working in groups?
- b. How are you planning to change to work more effectively in groups?
- c. Based on this experience, how would you describe the old adage. "Counselor, know thyself?" In other words, what have you learned about your own process of self-reflection?

The reflection papers were used as the source of data for this phenomenological study.

Method

Institutional Review Board approval was attained from both participating institutions and the ethical codes for research of both the American Counseling Association and The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision were followed. The research questions for the study were: How do the participants describe their experience of participating in a classroom based work group? How do the participants understand and make sense of their experiences while using the structured work group intervention designed to help them develop work group skills?

Participants

Participants were recruited from classes taking place in the summer of 2010 at two CACREP accredited Master's level counselor education programs in a mid-Western state. Students from the first university (n=28) were a mix of school and community counseling students completing the courses Group Procedures in Counseling and Career Development and Counseling. Thirty-two students were invited to participate in the study and 28 chose to participate (87.5% response rate). Each course was a core requirement in both programs of study. Students from the second university (n=16) were a combination of school and mental health counseling students completing the course Crisis Intervention and Consultation. Eighteen students were invited to participate in the study and 16 chose to participate (89% response rate). The students from the first university are from an urban context who had or were currently in different careers than counseling while returning for a post graduate degree. The students from the second university were primarily from a rural mid-Western context. Most students from both universities were working full-time concurrently while completing their counseling degrees. Because these students were completing their coursework and the researchers were professors of their programs, the researchers did not collect detailed demographic data in order to secure a higher response rate. Additionally the purpose of this research was phenomenological in nature, which doesn't necessarily explore group differences as we were exploring the common themes that emerged from their experience in the work group.

Data Collection and Analysis

A qualitative approach was chosen to elicit individual meaning from the experiences of students in their work groups. Using this approach to research is beneficial because of the nature of its focus on understanding complex social situations without previously defined parameters

(Sue et al., 1992). Van Manen's (1990) a hermeneutical approach to phenomenology was used in collecting and analyzing data. Specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology attends to the description of the phenomenon of study, but also to the interpretation of the phenomenon or lived experience. In the context of this study, phenomenological analysis sought to construct the experiences of students in their work groups. In order to explain the students' work group experiences 44 master's level counseling students self-selected to participate in the study.

For the purposes of this study, the researchers utilized Van Manen's (1990) holistic approach to data analysis. The holistic approach focuses on the transcript in entirety looking for a phrase or a sentence to encapsulate the essential meaning of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). Data gathered from the reflection papers was read and reread by the first and second authors independently to capture the fundamental meaning expressed in each paper. We strove to understand how the lived experience of each student was translated to the page as they worked their way through each phase of the intervention. Essential themes were derived by each author, independently, while variations were described using the selected reading approach (Van Manen, 1990). Selected readings were captured in a compilation of specific statements or phrases compiled independently by each reviewer to be shared later in the analysis. The two sets of independent findings were then shared for all 44 papers so that consensus could be derived amongst the theme names and selected readings. The process of bracketing (Van Manen, 1990) was employed during the shared consensus process so that the analysis stayed in contact with the concreteness of participants' lived reality.

Trustworthiness

According to Maxwell (2005), the key to validity, with regard to qualitative interpretation, pertains to possible threats to the researcher's interpretations of the phenomenon. Using Van Manen's (1990) approach to phenomenology does not call for the researcher to take a scientific, removed approach to research. Van Manen (1990) stated, "To establish a strong relation with a certain question, phenomenon, or notion, the researcher cannot afford to adopt an attitude of so-called scientific disinterestedness" (p. 33). The researchers took steps to ensure trustworthiness and accuracy of the lived experience portrayed in this study as mentioned above (Creswell, 2007).

While qualitative research from Van Manen's (1990) perspective values the role of the researcher as an individual interpreting the data, research rigor requires integrity be evident on the part of the researcher to ensure that the interpretations are grounded in the data. To ensure integrity, validation techniques or methods were used to reduce the threat to validity (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) suggests that qualitative researchers select at least two validation techniques or methods. The two validation techniques used in this study were an inquiry auditor and member checks.

Inquiry Auditor. The researchers (authors one and two), reviewed the reflection papers independently and then met to co-construct themes and selected readings that emerged. The inquiry auditor (third author) received the 44 reflection papers in addition to the researchers constructed themes and critically examined the themes to ensure accuracy. This resulted in the four themes that emerged and are described further in the results section in this manuscript.

Member Checks. Member checks were conducted via email 22 months after the completion of the courses. All participants (n=44) were sent an email invitation including the original reflection paper they completed as part of the study, a summary of the emergent themes as determined by the authors and verified by the inquiry auditor, and short questionnaire. Respondents (n=12) answered three member check questions. The final member check consisted of the open-ended questions:

- 1. How does this reflect your recollection of the experience?
- 2. What additions or extractions would you make from these themes?
- 3. From the themes that resonate for you today, how does this influence your current work as a counselor/counselor intern?

These questions were designed to illicit the accuracy of the themes that emerged. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) member checks increase the trustworthiness of qualitative studies because it allows subjects to confirm that the findings of the study accurately portray the experience.

The following is one student's response to the member check questions. Her response exemplifies what this pedagogical tool hoped to accomplish:

I have never really given any thought into what my exact role in a group setting is. I find it very interesting to put a label on how I work in a group and to see how others in the group perceive me. As we concluded our group project, I began to really notice each group member falling into a role and somewhat embracing our talents.

This student captured the essence of this project during her written submission used in the primary data analysis for the project.

The first question confirmed that the summary of emergent themes accurately reflected the student's recollection of their experience. Each of the twelve responding participants confirmed that the emergent themes matched their recollection of the process using language such as, "These themes seem to be right on."

Question two offered participants the opportunity to identify additions or extractions they would make from these themes. The majority of the participants (n=9) offered no changes to the emergent themes. Those who did respond to this prompt (n=3) simply reframed the wording of one of the themes to better reflect their own recollection. For example, one participant stated that, "I would just say that it all comes down to the concept of self-perception." This statement fits well within the theme of insights gained/blind spots.

Finally, the third question asked how the themes resonated for the participant currently as it influences his/her current work as a counselor/counselor intern. Respondents consistently reported that the experience impacted their confidence and has effectively improved their ability to work in task groups. As one wrote,

I am pleasantly surprised to read what I had written — I love going back in time and realizing that I was more mature than I realized — in fact, as I begin a new professional/vocational/academic journey [as a counseling resident], I will consult my reflections and use them to remind me of both my blind spots and my strengths. I will endeavor to be mindful of my peers' processes and check in regularly to see if my perceptions of our work together match the perceptions of my peers and what the match, or lack thereof, says about our work in general, and our group in particular.

Results

This study aimed to uncover the rich experiences of master's-level counselors-in-training participating in counselor education courses at two CACREP-accredited programs. A phenomenological approach to the data analysis provided a framework for the researchers to reveal the consistent themes in addition to noted differences in participant experiences. The primary themes that emerged via the hermeneutical process were group organization, insights/blind spots, personal perceptions/ expectations, and practical application. The overall themes were represented of the experiences of the counselors in training as they participated in a structured classroom intervention designed to build self-awareness and skills when participating in work groups.

Group Organization

Participants recognized that there was a component of group organization that saliently impacted their perceptions of and engagement in the work group. Within this theme, group organization during the early stages of meeting (i.e., scheduling of tasks and meeting times), group goal and member role setting (i.e., task assignments), and participation (i.e., ability to attend early meetings, feeling of belonging based on length of time in program or program identity – school versus mental health) contributed to the level of member engagement, development of group cohesion, individual role identification, and approach to the evaluation of other members. For each participant there was an experience of group organization that influenced his or her participation in the work group. The following excerpt described one participant's experience of scheduling meeting times and early group organization.

...we had a diverse group which consisted of some members who worked during the day, some that worked at night, and some that didn't work. Therefore, it was difficult to schedule meeting times with group members.

This participant spoke to the challenge of balancing multiple schedules and how this experience assisted in learning the importance of "acting as a consultant and working with others." Another participant also shared his/her experience of the beginning organization as negotiating tasks early on in the group. The group member was hesitant initially regarding the group process and expectations. The following excerpt illustrates the experience.

The fact that I am at a different point in the program than the rest of the group was painfully obvious to me in the first meeting. However, the group was able to divide the project into individual tasks and each member worked equally hard to complete the task that they volunteered to complete. The entire process of creating the workshop went smoothly.

For this particular member, because the work group immediately organized themselves through the delegation of group tasks, it contributed to the overall member engagement and development of group cohesion. For another group member, her experience was different, in that, they had challenges surrounding the development of the group topic initially.

This group project was not without its normal complications. The decision to come up with a group topic was slightly more difficult this time. I believe this was due to the fact that some individuals were school counselor students while others were mental health students. Once the decision was made to go with 'self-mutilation,' the project did become easier...I made sure that I did my fair share and wanted to make sure that the project was completed to a high standard.

For this group member, the process of group organization included deducing the topic based on group member differences comprising of both mental health counseling and school counseling students. The participants each experienced group organization through early organization, delegation of tasks, and the development of group cohesion.

Insights Gained/Blind Spots

Students spoke to how the experience of using this intervention made them more aware of themselves in relationship to others. They reported becoming more aware of the types of things in groups that trigger their responses to other group members and the work group process (e.g., communication style, follow-through). In addition, self-perception and group member perceptions at times had discrepancies for students. The discrepancies invoked various emotional responses from fear to appreciation. Specific examples of work group reflections regarding the phenomena are highlighted below.

For each of the participants, there was an experience of becoming more aware of their blind spots as they engaged in the work group. The following excerpt illuminated one participant's experience of recognizing the value of collaboration when being involved in a work group context.

I never asked for advice, never "ran ideas by" someone. However, over seven years of teaching, my individual approach to everything has quickly been exposed as a damaging way to operate in education and especially in counseling. Realizing this about myself, collaborating is something I consistently work to improve. This work group assignment helped me advance in my ability to trust others and their opinions and to depend on the strength of multiple opinions and experiences. I cannot do it all as well as a group of experienced individuals can. I am giving the independent contractor in me the pink slip.

Through the process of the work group, this participant experienced a realization of the tendency to take on an individual approach to tasks rather than consider how group members may benefit the experience and process. Upon reflection, the group member became aware that the individual contribution is not as critical as the synergy that accompanies working with a collaborative whole.

Similarly, another participant shared the experience of becoming aware of her difficulty trusting other members to contribute to the work group process. The following excerpt illustrates the experience.

One of the things that really came to my attention while doing this project was my lack of trust in the other members to do the work. I have a lot of confidence in myself to write a good paper and more or less had the attitude that I wanted to do that so that I knew it would be done well. I realize now that in a consultation and/or collaboration, that is not the approach to take, especially in a consultation in which the point is to help the consultee learn and/or improve in a certain area. If I do the bulk of the work and do not let the consultee share the responsibilities, then he/she will not likely get as much out of the consultation as they could.

For this group member, there was recognition of the value of shared responsibilities within the framework of the project. The awareness of this blind spot was gained through the interaction and reflection within the work group experience.

Another group member recognized that her perceptions at times had discrepancies between her group members' perceptions. These discrepancies invoked awareness surrounding her interactions within the work group that may be potentially stifling to the work group process.

One major thing that I want to change is being perceived as a person who is not open to other group members' ideas. In reading the feedback of my peers, someone stated that I do not like an idea that is not my own. I instantly started chuckling to myself because, although I am not always conscious of being dominant in a group setting, I can see that this is a valid statement and something that I want to change about myself. Another statement from a peer was that I was not always "on task," and would sometimes relay research that I had found (while reading it from the book, article, etc.) while the group was on to something else. Again, this is a valid statement and one that I am now very aware of.

This participant became more aware of the characteristics of herself that may not be helpful to the work group process. As a result of her experience and reflection, the participant was considering how she may interact in work groups in the future. Overall, the participants each experienced blind spots through gaining personal insights surrounding their interactions within the work group. While participants experienced an awareness surrounding their blind spots, they also were prompted to take action further in light of their new awareness.

Personal Perceptions/ Expectations

Group members did not approach the work group task without bias. Personal perceptions, past group experiences, and performance expectations all seemed to influence members' expectations and approach to the work group. In the area of personal perceptions one member reported,

I am a perfectionist. This aspect of group work has always been a struggle for me.

Though I definitely enjoy the time spent together planning and designing projects and

papers, it always goes south for me when the actual writing of the paper or presentation of the project occurs ... simply because everyone wants to do their own thing.

In addition to personal perceptions, many group members reported previous experiences with classroom work groups that had sullied their perception of the satisfaction and efficacy of working in such groups.

The process of working in a group was much more pleasant than I had expected. Often in undergrad it was difficult to work in groups because of conflicts in personality or time schedules but in this group we all seemed to work in harmony.

Finally, personal performance expectations can be a salient factor in one's predisposition to classroom work group assignments as illuminated by the participant who stated, "At first, I was a little confused because I was not sure how this assignment could interpret my level of competence for the assignment."

Practical Application

Students spoke to how their experiences with the work group would inform their future professional development activities. Student reflections in this area diverged into two distinct areas based upon their receipt of external feedback from peer group members: new insight into their future work with clients and external confirmation of personal strengths.

Students became cognizant of how their behaviors impacted the work group dynamic and translated this new insight into their future work with students/clients by identifying areas for personal growth. This insight proved relevant to participants in multiple ways, including personal attributes:

I am pretty assertive and I like things done a certain way, so I tend to get things done my way. That's not always the best way to do things. I need to spend more time listening and

value others' opinions and ideas more. I need to learn that it's okay to try different ways of doing things.

Furthermore, some participants made connections to the specific nature of their future work setting and the importance of group work.

As a school counselor I will work with many different groups of people-parents, the administration, other professionals in the community, and my co-workers in the school. I can use my skills as a creator while working in groups in the future to keep everyone on the same page. In my opinion, when groups are unorganized people do not get along as well. Tension mounts when groups procrastinate and fail to delineate tasks.

Finally, participants recognized that advocacy and social justice would be an integral aspect of their future work as counselors. Through reflection of their experience within the work groups, participants drew insight regarding the power and voice they can be for their clients. The below excerpt depicts a participant's experience.

In terms of advocacy, I have realized I need to be more of a problem-solver. I need to get in the action and do everything I can to be a voice for my clients. Simply following the lead of someone else will not adequately get it done and I will have to step it up to be a good advocate for my clients in the future.

A second area that emerged within this theme found that participants benefitted from external confirmation of personal strengths and attributes that contributed to positive group development and cohesion. This confirmation was, at times, perceived as validation for attributes that were no surprise to the participants.

The best part of reading the feedback was seeing that my group members appreciated my organization, planning, and preparation. I have worked in groups in the past and felt my efforts went unnoticed, but that was not the case in this group.

Discussion

Results from this study provide preliminary findings supporting the efficacy of implementing a constructivist technique for developing counseling students' self-awareness and skill through work/task groups in the classroom. Four themes emerged in this study: group organization, insights/blind spots, personal perceptions/expectations, and practical application.

Students indicated that group organization impacted both their perceptions and subsequent engagement in the work group. This theme is linked to both the notion of the pregroup phenomenon, as well as the early stages of group development (norm setting) (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Early expectations and the possibility of creating a working group are dependent upon the symbiosis of group member expectations and group leader behaviors as they initially approach the task at hand. The successful resolution of any conflict or tension that arises during this earliest stage is imperative to successful completion of the group's objective. This experience seemed to be an example of constructivist learning where students actively engaged in and understood why the forming stage of any group is critical.

The experience of the work group intervention seemed to also contribute to greater insight with regard to blind spots. Students indicated that they were more aware of themselves in relationship to others, as well as their general sense of being in the group environment. Areas for interpersonal improvement were highlighted, particularly as it pertained to their counselor development. Most students seemed committed to working on aspects of self that were perceived somewhat negatively, and indicated that this was good interpersonal learning.

More powerful were the attributes that were revealed to participants through the group process:

The two areas where I found the most discrepancies [between self assessment and that of peers] where that of creator and observer. The most shocking for me was the role of creator. I have never really felt that I excelled in the role of creator. I like hearing other people's ideas and making them work. I don't think I realized that this is one aspect in the role of creator. My peers rated me much higher in the role of creator than I did myself. As we concluded the group project, I found this to be accurate and it actually empowered me and gave me more confidence when working through our project.

Given that part of the intervention was to receive feedback from peers, another theme that emerged in the study was personal perceptions/expectations. Students were presented with the feedback of others' experiences of them in group which provided an unexpected opportunity to work on personal areas that were perceived as needing self-improvement. Regardless of personal predispositions, the introduction of peer feedback seemed to have spurred many participants to deeper reflection and action. The series of quotations from a single participant in the following two paragraphs demonstrates the constructivist process of approaching a realistic dilemma from a stance of reflection (on self and peers), self-monitoring (comparison of personal assessment with that of peers), and cognitively engaging in complex problem solving which, in this case, lead to action (Walters, 1994).

Said one participant about providing feedback to peers, "I have been surprised to realize through this whole experience that I can be very critical of others on paper." This same respondent reported her perspective on her first self-assessment, "I assessed myself on my prior knowledge of how I usually like to work in a group." Then upon receiving peer feedback this

same group member stated, "I was somewhat disappointed that my work group did not see that [creator] part of me yet, and I knew I was going to work hard so they would see my creator side."

Judging from the second round of assessment and feedback, this same participant reported,

I was happier with the outcome of this assessment and I think it was due to the fact that I was able to prove myself to be a worker. My peers graded me as a deliverer. I like to be the person that gets the ball rolling, follows through, and gets things done. I was so thrilled when I read the comments.

It would seem from the case described above and others that unexpected feedback received from peer work group members elicited feelings of surprise and resulted in the counselors-in-training being motivated to change perceptions and work intentionally on areas that were perceived as needing self-improvement. This was one of two common reactions to unexpected feedback with the second being the demonstration of resistant to the feedback from their peers by either ignoring the feedback or refuting its legitimacy. For example, one group member stated,

Luckily, I found an additional piece of myself more important than the issues discussed above [peers not having similar experiences] through this experience. As much as I would like to deny this realization, I was like a child throwing a temper tantrum because I did not get my way. I wanted to gather up my toys and go home.

Finally, students spoke to the impact upon their future group activities. It seemed as if there were two distinct aspects to this theme, as students spoke to insight regarding their future work with clients as well as the external confirmation of known personal strengths. The work groups highlighted areas for personal growth as it related to future work with clients. This theme not only reflects increased self-awareness, but also provided a means with which to increase their

self-efficacy regarding counseling work. While the simple act of raising self-awareness through this intervention would have provided benefit, the goal of the authors was to impact student development as counselors. The salience of this intervention in regards to practical applications as reported in this section provides the most powerful confirmation of its efficacy. Each of the four themes was supported by the inquiry auditor and member checks.

Implications

Counselor educators. The impact of the participants' experiences in the study provides implications for counselor educators. The experiences of the participants identifying ways to be more effective as counselors and advocates may encourage counselor educators to implement a pedagogical process that encourages systematic reflection within the work group context. A detailed focus on curriculum and resource development has the potential to enhance the training and development of emerging counselors. Specifically, counselor educators can utilize an instrument similar to the one used in this project (see Appendix A) into core counseling courses to assist in facilitating student awareness surrounding further areas of growth and reflection.

As the researchers engaged students in the process of reflecting and observing group members throughout their work group experience, the authors considered what contributing factors impacted the discrepancies of group members' experiences. The researchers found themselves considering numerous questions. For example, as we facilitated the course(s) do we think the efficacy of the work groups had to do more with group member personality than the intervention? What about the combination of students? How does development and length in the program impact group member interactions? These questions help the teaching faculty to be mindful of constructivist principals and Richardson's "goals that focus on individual students

developing deep understandings in the subject matter of interest and habits of mind that aid in future learning" (2003, p.1627).

Emerging counselors. The emergent process of integrating the work group reflection within pedagogy challenges counselor educators to consider whether they believe emerging counselors should utilize this type of reflection with clients. Because the exchange of feedback is considered essential in promoting inter- and intra-personal learning within the therapeutic group context with clients (Morran & Stockton, 1991), it appears feasible that a tool and reflective process similar to the "Work Group Feedback Form" applied in this study may be effective for counselors use. This tool can provide a framework for counselors as they teach clients to receive and give both positive and corrective feedback.

Limitations

Although the researchers combined methods to ensure credibility of the research findings, there were limitations present in the study. The limitations included the selection of participants (only participants from CACREP-accredited programs were selected), potential bias because students were in the author's courses, the member check method, data collection method (reflection papers), and the duration between data collection and the member check.

The participants included in the study were from CACREP-accredited counselor training programs; thus, the inquiry did not investigate the experiences of participants from non-CACREP-accredited counselor training programs. It is unknown how the emergent process may have been affected or what uniqueness could have emerged if voice was given to participants from non-CACREP-accredited counselor training programs. Furthermore, participants were recruited only form the authors' classes opening the possibility that coercion or social persuasion may have influenced their participation and responses.

The member check interview was limiting, in that, the themes were verified by email. Although the researchers worked diligently to accurately determine the accuracy of the themes through email, the subtle nuances of verbal and nonverbal communication remained unexplored. For example, if the researchers had used face-to-face interviews to conduct the member check, there would have been an opportunity to explore the participants' verbal and nonverbal communication patterns. Face—to-face interviews had the potential to promote fuller disclosure.

The data collection method was reflection papers which would not allow for follow-up questions like an interview would. Although the reflection papers yielded accurate results as to the participants' experience in their work groups, it did not allow for further clarification questions. Further clarification questions may have resulted in more themes or sub-themes to emerge. Finally, the use of reflection papers did not illicit verbal and non-verbal communication patterns which may have provided opportunity for further reflection.

The research also presented potential limitations because of the time that elapsed between data collection and the member check. The participants received a summary of the researchers' interpretations before the member check via written descriptions identifying the themes that emerged. Because the member check was conducted three semesters after the data was collected and analyzed, it is unknown what impact the lapse of time between the work group experience and reflection had on the emerging process.

A final limitation that emerged was the researchers' decision to not include a detailed demographic questionnaire. In the research methods section participants are described in the context of the universities where the participants were selected, however more detailed information regarding the participants (i.e. race, gender, religious orientation, sexual orientation) was not collected and could be potentially useful information. Further quantitative studies may

benefit using the TAIS and uncovering potential group differences and responses attained from the use of the instrument.

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study provides insight for counselor educators who currently or might in the future use group work as part of their classroom pedagogy. Future studies might continue to explore the nature work group development through classroom interventions by assessing student awareness and skill development throughout their counselor education training instead of in a single class experience. Furthermore, the study of work group experiences, awareness, and skill development in clinical course settings and practica/internship placements would further enhance knowledge of the developmental nature of work group skill acquisition and the impact it has on counselor-in-training development.

The results of this study might provide an early stepping stone to future research designed to develop means of assessing work group attitudes and skills. These instruments might include measures of attitudes towards working in task groups, observation check lists that can be used by instructors, and supervisor questionnaires to be used in clinical training environments and professional settings. Regardless of future research endeavors, work groups will likely remain a salient aspect of counselor training and effective practice.

References

- Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW). (2000). ASGW professional standards for the training of group workers. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 25, 327–342.
- Bernard, J.M. (1989). Training supervisors to examine relationship issues using IPR. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 7, 103-112.
- Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2005). 2001 standards. Retrieved May 25, 2005, from http://www.cacrep.org/2001Standards.html
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2007). *Basics of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dollarhide, C. T., Smith, A. T., & Lemberger, M. E. (2007). Critical incidents in the development of supportive principals: Facilitating school counselor-principal relationships. *Professional School Counseling*, *10*, 360-369.
- Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper (2003). Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace: International perspectives in research and practice. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Hase, S., Davies, A., & Dick, B. (1999). *The Johari Window and the Dark Side of Organisations*. Southern Cross University.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Lara, T., Pope, M., & Minor, C.W. (Eds.). (2011). Experiential activities for teaching career counseling classes and for facilitating career groups, Volume III. Broken Arrow: National Career Development Association.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Marks, M.A., Sabella, M.J., Burke, C.S., & Zaccaro, S.J. (2002). The impact of cross training on team effectiveness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 3-13.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Merchant, N., & Dupuy, P. (1996). Multicultural counseling and qualitative research: Shared worldview and skills. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74, 537–541.
- Morran, D. K., & Stockton, R. R. (1991). Delivery of positive and corrective feedback in counseling groups. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 38 (4), 410.
- Nideffer, R.M. (1976). Test of attentional and interpersonal style. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34 (3), 394-404.
- Piaget, J. (1970). Piaget's theory. In P.H. Mussen (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (Vol. 4, pp. 103-128). New York: Wiley.
- Pope, M., Pangelinana, J. S., & Coker, A. D. (Eds.). Experiential activities for teaching multicultural counseling classes and infusing cultural diversity into core classes. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Richardson, V. (2003) Constructivist Pedagogy. *Teachers College Record*, 105, 1623–1640. doi: 10.1046/j.1467-9620.2003.00303.x
- Rogers, C. R. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality and interpersonal relationships, as developed in the client-centered framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A study of science* (Vol. 3, pp. 210-211; 184-256). New York: McGraw Hill.

- Sue, D. W., Arredondo, P., & McDavis, R. J. (1992). Multicultural counseling competencies: A call to the profession. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development*, 24, 42-78. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-1912.1992.tb00563.x
- Stevens, M.J., & Campion, M.A. (1994). The knowledge, skill, and ability requirements for teamwork: Implications for human resource management. *Journal of Management*, 20, 503-530.
- Sundstrom, E. (1999). The challenges of supporting work team effectiveness. In E. Sundstrom & Associates (Eds.), *Supporting work team effectiveness* (pp. 3-23). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Tang, M., Addison, K. D., LaSure-Bryant, D., Norman, R., O'Connell, W., & Stewart-Sicking, J. A. (2004). Factors that influence self-efficacy of counseling students: An exploratory study. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, 44, 70-80. doi: 10.1002/j.1556-6978.2004.tb01861.x
- Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Walters, K. S. (1994). Introduction: Beyond logicisim in critical thinking. In *Re-Thinking* reason: New perspectives in critical thinking. K. S. Walter. Albany, NY, State University of New York Press: 1-22.
- Yalom, I., & Leszcz, M. (2005). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (5th ed.). New York: Basic Books.

Appendix A Intentional Work Group Reflection Worksheet

Counselor-in-Training Being Assessed			Date	
Course Description	CNS ED 6200	CNS ED 6250	CNS ED 6300	
Completed by	Instructor	Peer S	Self	
 Observed 2. Del 3. Cree 4. Pro 	elor-in-Training along the folserver – assesses surrounding up members iverer – implements actions, ator – analyzes and plans, de blem solver – solves problemaking	acts, and focuses on develops goals and organ	elivery nizes, and uses past to p	redict the future
 Observer – a members 	ssesses surroundings, has co	mmon or "street" sense	e, and anticipates reacti	ons of other group
Rejects	Indifferent	Emerging	Accepts	Embraces
2. Deliverer – implements actions, acts, and focuses on delivery				
Rejects	Indifferent	Emerging	Accepts	Embraces
3. Creator – analyzes and plans, develops goals and organizes, and uses past to predict the future				
Rejects	Indifferent	Emerging	Accepts	Embraces
4. Problem solver – solves problems, uses logic to facilitate group process, and rehearses before speaking				
Rejects	Indifferent	Emerging	Accepts	Embraces
	otal time do you estimate tha			work group?
	w easy this counselor-in-train a meaningful way?)	ning was to work with.	(Was s/he a team playe	r? Did they

Author Note

Brian Hutchison: University of Missouri - St Louis

Melissa Odegard-Koester: Southeast Missouri State University

Rebecca Koltz: Montana State University

Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Brian Hutchison at

hutchisonbr@umsl.edu

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7729/81.1105

Responding to Race Related Trauma: Counseling and Research Recommendations to Promote Post-Traumatic Growth when Counseling African American Males

Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, Volume 8, Number 1, Spring 2016

Amanda M. Evans, Carrie Hemmings, Christopher Burkhalter, Virgina Lacy

The application of Post-Traumatic Growth, a resiliency based approach, for counselors working with African-American male clients who have experienced race-based trauma is described. The role of cognitive processing and meaning making are reviewed. Implications for counseling, education and research are provided.

Keywords: post-traumatic growth, race-based trauma, African American males

In 2014, following the death of Michael Brown, Jr., the media begged the question – are African American men held to a different standard in the United States (Lee, 2014). The Federal Bureau of Investigation (2002) reported that there were 3,642 racially motivated hate crimes reported and that 68% were characterized as anti-African (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). African American people comprise 14.1% (45,003,365) of the United States' population; however, they are overrepresented in the prison population and receive harsher judicial penalties than their White counterparts (U.S. Census, 2013). Additionally, African American people represent 28.1% of individuals living in poverty (a 3% increase since 2005) and reflect a higher rate of unemployed individuals in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013; U.S. Census, 2013). Research has consistently noted that racial and gender disparities exist in the utilization and continuation of mental health services for African American people (Franklin, 1999; Neighbors, Caldwell, Williams, Neese, Taylor, Bullard, Torres & Jackson, 2007; Vogel,

Wester, Hammer & Downing-Matibag, 2013). For example, African Americans are less likely to adhere to or utilize healthcare treatment than their White counterparts as a result of historical factors, including: the mistreatment of African American people in medical trials, institutional racism, and a lack of equitable medical services across racial groups (Altice, Mostashari & Friedland, 2001; Hammond, 2010; LaVeist, Nickerson & Bowie, 2000). This underutilization of services suggests that many mental health issues experienced by African American men and women are left untreated (Holden, McGregor, Blanks & Mahaffey, 2012). More specifically, African American men are less likely than African American women to seek out healthcare services including counseling and psychotherapy (Hammond, 2010). African American men remain one of the most underserved populations in the mental health field (Holden et al., 2012). A contributing factor to this disparity is the impact of racism and Race-Based Trauma experienced by African Americans.

Racism is the belief that people of a specific phenotype and/or ethnic group are inferior (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). By definition, racism maintains power and control while providing a rationale for degrading a specific group (Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). Through continued exposure to racism, individuals may begin to experience sub-threshold Post Traumatic Stress Disorder symptomology and/or Race Based Trauma (Carter, 2007). Race-Based Trauma is defined as an individual's personal exposure to racism that causes emotional stress, physical harm and/or fear (Bryant-Davis, 2007; Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). "These assaults can be verbal attacks, physical attacks, or threats to livelihood, but because they are racially motivated, they strike the core of one's selfhood" (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005, p. 480). In situations where Race-Based Trauma is experienced, individuals can be overwhelmed by the situation to the extent that they are unable to employ effective coping strategies and may experience negative

symptomology (Bryant-Davis, 2007). Individuals who have experienced Race-Based Trauma may report negative symptomology including depression (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002), increased use of alcohol consumption, poor self-concept, health complications, and decreased self-esteem (Verkuyten, 1998; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). In addition, individuals who were exposed to racially traumatic events experienced posttraumatic symptomology similar to that of individuals who were survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault, may be experienced by individuals who were exposed to events that were racially traumatic (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005).

One recommendation for addressing Race-Based Trauma when working with African American men in counseling is through the application of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) strategies in the provision of counseling services. PTG is defined as an individual's experience of positive change and resiliency following a traumatic life event (Calhoun, Cann, Tedeschi & McMillan, 2000). PTG is often thought to occur after a person experiences a traumatic event significant enough to challenge their previous assumptions about the world (i.e., victim or witness of violent event such as sexual assault, interpersonal violence, natural disaster) (Larner & Blow, 2011). Individuals who experience PTG are able to cope with the trauma through identifying significance or purpose in the traumatic event (Park, Riley & Snyder, 2012). This paper intends to examine how counseling professionals can implement PTG approaches when working with African American men who are victims of Race-Based Trauma. Recommendations for counselors are included.

African American Men

It is proposed that many men are conditioned from childhood to be self-reliant, and individuals who are bound to this stereotype may be more likely to refuse participating in mental health services to avoid appearing weak or less masculine (Vogel et al., 2011). In addition, men who endorsed these cultural messages were less likely to refer male friends or acquaintances to mental health professionals (Vogel et al., 2013). Conceptually, how African American men define and embody their masculine identity may differ from White men (Hammond & Mattis, 2005). Bush and Bush (2013) explored three primary factors that have significantly influenced African American masculine identity including slavery, the matriarchal system commonly seen in African American communities, and the Civil Rights movement. These significant historical events and trends have defined the African American culture in the United States and contributed to African American male masculine identification. Considering that both African Americans and men underutilize mental health care services due to cultural, societal, accessibility and other related issues, the status of mental health care services for African American men is cause for serious concern. Professional counselors should conceptualize these factors and explore additional research, ensuring culturally appropriate practices are utilized to encourage African American men to seek and continue treatment.

Through his term *invisibility syndrome*, Franklin (1999) attempted to describe the common experiences of African American men in the United States. Suggesting that African Americans are often marginalized and misunderstood, Franklin hypothesized that African American men often feel invisible as a result of cross-racial interactions which leads to issues related to poor self-identification, negative coping strategies, and increased stress reactions. These feelings of invisibility are reinforced by cultural and environmental factors including

stereotypes, microaggressions, and discrimination. The invisibility syndrome contributes to African American men's struggle with identity formation, and reluctance to seek counseling services.

Regarding healthy identity development, African Americans men may feel frustrated in how society perceives them, as they would like to be recognized for their accomplishments, not current stereotypes (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). Given that racial discrimination occurs across so many areas of life, African Americans themselves are often unaware of just how greatly they are negatively affected by daily microaggressions (Ponds, 2013). Repeated experiences of discrimination often lead to feelings of low self-worth (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000), restrictive emotionality, and more depressive symptoms among African American men (Hammond, 2012).

Experiences with Racism and Race-Based Trauma

A pervasive problem in the United States, racism can be conceptualized from individual, cultural and institutional levels (Bryan-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). These individual and cultural acts of racism, which reflect beliefs of superiority, may be demonstrated through slurs, exclusion and degradation (Franklin, 1999). Institutional racism occurs when racial attitudes are reinforced through tokenism, inequality, promoting racial majorities in the workplace, segregation and subjugation (Franklin, 1999). In the United States, acts of racism have transformed from overt racist acts to more covert and concealed ones. Examples of covert racism might include microaggression in the forms of receiving poor customer service as a result of one's race, redlining neighborhoods and restrictive housing contracts (Hammond, 2010). The effects of racism can have lasting consequences to victims, observers and society as a whole.

In a study conducted by Williams and Williams-Morris (2000), researchers were able to thematically separate race-based discrimination, as it related to mental health through the following constructs: a) institutional racism that leads to barriers in accessing and receiving treatment; b) experiences of racial discrimination that impacts one's identity and overall mental health; and c) internationalization of these discriminatory messages that impairs one's perception of self and the world. Racial discrimination claims filed at the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) have remained consistent and the largest category of complaints filed in comparison to gender, sexual orientation, religious orientation, et cetera (EEOC, n.d.). Institutional racism can impact the recruitment, retention, and promotion of African American men in college and employment settings. It is also important to note that the reported statistics found in this manuscript and in the EEOC report are estimated to be low as instances of discrimination are often overlooked, and primarily egregious and profound acts of racism are only reported to the EEOC (Schneider, Hitlan & Radhakrishnan, 2000). Of the individuals who did report experiences with racial discrimination in the workplace, Schneider et al. (2000) found that 40% to 67% of those respondents reported a lower sense of well-being after the event. These statistics support the previous claims that racial discrimination is a pervasive problem that negatively impacts the victim's quality of life.

The impact of Race-Based Trauma can lead to internalized devaluation and voicelessness, an assaulted sense of self, and rage (Hardy, 2013). Unfortunately, the conditions that reinforce Race-Based Trauma symptomology are not likely to change and mental health counselors need to begin to take steps to recognize and address these often hidden wounds (Calvert, 1997; Hardy, 2013). Methods to improve African American men's participation in counseling services may include offering more strengths-based, activity focused and preventative

alternatives that model male socialization preferences (Evans, Carney & Wilkinson, 2012; Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992). However, there is a paucity of research for addressing Race-Based Trauma especially in working with African American men.

Post Traumatic Growth

While exposure to trauma has shown to have numerous negative effects on mental health, the potential for positive change following adversity, suffering, and trauma has also long been recognized in philosophy, literature, and, especially, in various religions (Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998). Only in recent years have researchers begun to systematically study and theorize the phenomenon of positive change following traumatic life events, now commonly called Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). An alternative to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), PTG acknowledges the resilience and growth that can occur following a traumatic event whereby the individual derives meaning from an event that caused suffering to transcend the trauma (Van Slyke, n.d.). Researchers purported that between 30 to 90% of individuals who have experienced trauma reported positive growth and change (Sawyer & Ayers, 2009).

Some argue that PTG is a coping style, while others believe that PTG is the result of successful coping after a traumatic and stressful event (Van Slyke, n.d.). Outcomes of PTG can include: a) a greater sense of compassion and value towards others; b) enhanced personal relationships; and c) an overall appreciation of life including an emphasis on resiliency (Joseph, Murphy & Regal, 2012). Additionally, individuals who reported experiencing PTG stated that they had higher levels of autonomy, a greater mastery over their environment, more positive relationships, an openness to growth, greater self-acceptance, and the belief that they have found their purpose in life (Triplett, Tedeschi, Cann, Calhoun & Reeve, 2012). Sheikh (2008) found

that individuals who reported PTG demonstrated self-efficacy and an internal locus of control. While on the surface Race-Based Trauma may not seem to meet the criteria for PTG to occur, African American men are continually exposed to racial discrimination that is subtle, leading to verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities that communicate hostility or negativity because of their race (Sue et al., 2008). The accumulation of these microaggressions leads to feelings of isolation, loss of control and emotional detachment as well as symptoms of intrusive rumination, emotional detachment and a decrease in learning and health outcomes (Constantine, 2007; Sue et al., 2008). Thus, PTG strategies are an ideal tool to incorporate into the provision of counseling services as it focuses on the individual experience while acknowledging environmental conditions that reinforced the traumatic event.

Following a traumatic event, in this case Race-Based Trauma, individuals may process the event in a variety of ways. Cognitively, the individual might engage in deliberate rumination by intentionally thinking about the traumatic event over and over again (Triplett, Tedeschi, Cann, Calhoun, & Reeve, 2012). Researchers purported that some forms of cognitive processing promote PTG while other forms are negatively associated with positive growth (Stockton et al., 2011; Triplett et al., 2012), and that counselors should be mindful of this as they reflect on the race-based incident(s) with their client. Reflecting on these findings seem to suggest that active coping styles versus avoidant or passive coping is positively correlated with PTG (Gerber, Boals, & Schuettler, 2011; Schuettler & Boals, 2011; Schmidt, Blank, Bellizzi & Park, 2012). Adhering to Tedeschi, Park and Calhoun's (1998) original presentation of PTG, we have modified the approach to address African American male clients. The three PTG constructs specifically addressed in this manuscript include: a) deliberate rumination; b) disclosure of Race-Based Trauma; and c) social and cultural factors.

Promoting Post Traumatic Growth with African American Men

The promotion of Post-Traumatic Growth among African American men will require a combination of cultural competence and the implementation of methods often associated with the treatment of trauma survivors. "Education on cultural competence needs to include not only self-awareness, knowledge of cultural traditions, and skills for culturally appropriate interventions, but also an understanding of power, privilege and racial oppression," (Sue & Sue, 2003 as cited in Bryant-Davis, 2007). The following are specific recommendations for providing culturally sensitive PTG treatment for working with African American men who have experienced Race-Based Trauma. Although many of these recommendations focus on techniques to use in session, this information could easily be integrated into clinically based counseling courses that focus on the preparation of counselors-in-training. The focus on how to integrate PTG into counseling practice is used to emphasize the application of this approach for practitioners.

Deliberate Rumination

Deliberate rumination following a traumatic event may occur to help restructure the individual's challenged perception of their worldview and can promote positive growth if the individual is able to derive meaning from the event(s) (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1998; Taku, Cann, Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2009). Triplett et al. (2012) suggested a general pattern for deriving meaning from a traumatic event that begins with significant rumination that causes high levels of distress in the individual. Unable to maintain this hyper-vigilance, individuals may then begin to deliberately ruminate leading to meaning-making approaches (e.g., deriving purpose from the event), the reduction of stress symptomology, and the promotion of PTG. These findings suggest that it is possible for PTG and event related distress to coexist, at least until a clear resolution of the traumatic event has been achieved (Triplett et al., 2012).

Counselors can assist their clients in the reduction of stress symptomology experienced through rumination by utilizing PTG approaches when addressing Race-Based Trauma by implementing meaning-making and stress reduction approaches in session. Possible interventions might include countering cognitive distortions, providing psychoeducational training on mindfulness/relaxation approaches, identifying the coping skills used to overcome specific instances of Race-Based Trauma, and celebrating one's racial/gender identity through meaning-making activities. Strengths-based and Solution-Focused approaches may be specifically helpful for African American male clients as these provide problem-focused interventions that are often consistent with male preferences for counseling services (Evans et al., 2012).

Recognizing individual strengths in African American men may assist in promoting healthy cognitive processing and the exploration of Post Traumatic Growth (Carter, 2007). Personality factors associated with Post-Traumatic Growth include extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and optimism (Linley & Joseph, 2004). Thus, counselors can create a climate in the counseling session that promotes self-efficacy and emphasizes self-esteem (Hoge, Austin & Pollack, 2006; Linley & Joseph, 2004). Interventions to consider might include Collective Memory Exercises (Kivel & Johnston, 2009), Narrative Therapy (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007) and applying the Integrity Model (Evans et al., 2012; Lander & Nahon, 2008).

Personality, social and psychological factors all contribute to PTG. In order to achieve these outcomes, it is imperative that individuals subjectively appraise the traumatic event causing their posttraumatic stress as well as acknowledge and accept that their reaction to the trauma is normal (Joseph & Williams, 2005). If the individual experiences a greater level of perceived threat and harm in a traumatic situation, he may be more likely to experience PTG (Linley & Joseph, 2004). This correlation of threat and growth may be the result of increased self-

awareness, positive growth and a higher level of perceived controllability (Linley & Joseph, 2004). Researchers believe that the experienced traumatic event must be significant enough to challenge previously held beliefs, thus prompting rumination and leading to PTG (Lindstrom et al., 2011). If the event does not challenge the individual's worldview, they are less likely to experience PTG.

In session, counselors can assess client strengths and personality factors in creating a climate conducive to PTG. Counselors might consider introducing strengths-based assessments and therapeutic interventions that address maladaptive thoughts (e.g., thought stopping techniques, thought restructuring). Through addressing strengths and beliefs, counselors can assist African American men in attempting resiliency exercises leading to the exploration of individual experiences and possible coping strategies. In the absence of the perceived threat that occurred during the traumatic event, the counseling session can provide the client an opportunity to analyze a highly emotional event in a safe environment. By using psychoeducational techniques (e.g., helping the client to identify instances of racism in the United States and acknowledging the prevalence of racial discrimination), justifying the individuals experience (i.e., validating the client's experience of race-based trauma) and working together to empower and support the client – the incorporation of PTG can acknowledge and enhance the services available to African American men.

Disclosure of Race-Based Trauma

When addressing Race-Based Trauma in counseling using a PTG perspective, counselors should be prepared to discuss issues of racism, discrimination and race-based trauma in session. White counselors might consider broaching techniques (Day-Vines, 2007) to assist in developing a climate for race-based discussions. Counselors should work to process and identify the trauma

without trying to justify, fix or change the perspective of the client. During this discussion, counselors can assist the client in reappraising and finding significance in the discrimination through discussions focused on coping, resilience and purposeful living (Evans, Kluck, Hill, Crumley, & Turchan, in press; Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992). Clinicians can also help their clients identify helpful coping strategies as well as to promote positive as opposed to negative emotional states (Joseph, Murphy, & Regel, 2012).

In this circumstance, clients might identify with feelings of invisibility, the pressure of masculine gender norms and self-fulfilling prophecies. While acknowledging and validating this experience, counselors can work with African American men to acknowledge the skills achieved through suffering which might include empathy for other diverse individuals in the United States, a determination to become a change agent and/or a desire to leave a legacy for future generations of African American people.

Social and Cultural Factors

Social support has been defined as the availability and presence of network members who provide care, concern, love and coping support (Sarason et al., 1983). It has been referred to as 'leaning on shoulders' in the African American community and involves communicating with others about experiences and events as a means of coping with racism (Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Social support networks can include family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, clergy and others. It has been found to be an adaptive defense against stress and an option to address diversity (Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000). In these circumstances, individuals may feel a sense of connectedness and understanding when sharing their experiences with racism with individuals who have had similar experiences. Group members can provide guidance in effective ways to respond to and cope (Brondolo, Brady, Pencille, Beatty & Contrada, 2009). Furthermore, group

members can serve as models within a collective content which helps the individual experience a sense of connectedness to his racial/ethnic group and assist with racial identity (Harrell, 2000). In their study of cancer patients, Morris, Campbell, Dywer, Dunn and Chambers (2011) found that social support in the form of support groups promoted PTG through the establishment of role models and norming experiences. This study can apply to conceptualizing Race-Based Trauma, as counselors can assist clients in identifying bibliotherapeutic and social resources that address racial discrimination and acknowledge the severity of this problem in the United States.

When incorporating PTG approaches, counselors should consider the role social support plays in the client's coping style, cognitive processing, and meaning-making expression. This is particularly important in exploring what is helpful in their environment versus what might hinder this process (Joseph, Murphy, & Regel, 2012). Examples might include meeting with the client in a comfortable community-based environment, inviting supportive people to the counseling session and promoting consultation with social communities. Satisfaction with one's social support system has been positively associated with PTG (Linley & Joseph, 2004), and existence of social support systems has been found to greatly decrease the likelihood of PTSD symptoms in combat veterans (Larner & Blow, 2011). Strong social support systems may also be necessary for healthy self-disclosure, another contributing factor for PTG (Lindstrom et al., 2011).

Another cultural theme in the African American culture may be the influence of religion and spirituality on wellbeing. Religiosity and/or spirituality may be an important predictive factor for PTG (Calhoun et al., 2000). Religious commitment, participating in religious activities, participation in meditative prayer, openness to change, and a willingness to examine challenging questions associated with spirituality has been positively linked with PTG (Calhoun et al., 2000; Harris et al., 2010; Linley & Joseph, 2004; Shaw, Joseph, & Linley, 2005). In short, religion

provides a network of social support, explanations for negative events, and guidelines for coping with suffering (Gerber et al., 2011). While religious coping has been found to produce positive outcomes such as acceptance, hope, satisfaction with one's life, and stress-related growth (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005), it appears the type of religious coping plays a role in determining the degree of PTG an individual may achieve (Gerber et al., 2011).

Overall, positive religious coping (including seeking spiritual support, belief in a benevolent Deity, and religious forgiveness) was associated with PTG, whereas negative religious coping (including belief in an angry or punitive Deity, blaming a Deity, and spiritual discontent) was more predictive of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Gerber et al., 2011). The correlation between negative religious coping and PTSD can potentially be explained because a survivor of trauma may not only have to restructure worldviews shattered by the traumatic event, but may also be forced to deal with a newfound questioning of God. This trauma may lead to measurable growth as individuals are forced to question previous held assumptions about religion and spirituality to form a new belief system (Gerber et al., 2011).

In therapeutic practice, counselors can incorporate religion and spirituality when appropriate. In instances of race-based trauma, counselors can work with their clients in exploring the client's worldview including values, biases and paradoxes. Questions that explore the client's personal philosophies of life, meaning and purpose can propel discussions of race to assist the counselor in learning more about the client's identity. A focus on spirituality and religion can lead to the identification of social supports, inspiration, and a sense of purpose. Interestingly, clients who placed a greater emphasis on religion and spirituality were more likely to experience PTG by forgiving an offender (Schultz, Tallman, & Altmaier, 2010).

Conclusion

This article presented an overview of Race-Based Trauma as it relates to African American men and proposes the implementation of Post-Traumatic Growth strategies in the provision of counseling services to assist counselors in addressing this issue. There is a clear need for researchers to examine African American men, Race-Based Trauma, and Post-Traumatic Growth in consideration of current socio and political events in the United States. Although there is a body of conceptual literature on racism as trauma, this phenomenon has not been assessed and analyzed in a format that provides counselors with recommendations for serving victims of Race-Based Trauma. Neighbors and Howard (1987) found that African American men who sought counseling services varied in severity of mental health symptomology. This may be a result of multiple factors including presenting problem, socioeconomic status, access to healthcare, et cetera. However, it is important to note that this specific population may experience unique help seeking behaviors that are currently unexamined.

In consideration of the current research, the application of Post-Traumatic Growth strategies in counseling when working with African American men is recommended. One limitation is that Post-Traumatic Growth is often associated with higher levels of education and resiliency, and although PTG may be a protective factor from PTSD symptomology (Linley & Joseph, 2004; Park et al., 2012; Salo, Quota & Punamaki, 2005), these insulating factors may not be available to all clients. Since there are some significant socio-demographic factors that negatively impact a large majority of the African American male population (e.g., increased risk of incarceration, higher rates of poverty and decreased educational opportunities), some of the protective factors associated with PTG may not apply to all African American male clients. Thus, it is imperative that counselors realistically consider the PTG strategies included and apply

the recommendations consistent with their client's needs and presenting concern. Accounting for the role racial trauma may play in African American male's PTG is essential in providing an accurate portrayal of the prevalence and consequences of racial discrimination in our society.

References

- Altice, F. L., Mostashari, F. & Friedland, G. H. (2001). Trust and the acceptance of and adherence to antiretroviral therapy. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*, 28, 47-58.
- Boyd-Franklin, N., Franklin, A. J. & Toussaint, P. (2000). *Boys into Men: Raising our African American teenage sons*. New York: Dutton.
- Brondolo, E., Brady, N., Pencille, M., Contrada, R. (2009). Coping with racism: A selective review of the literature and a theoretical and methodological critique. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, *32*(1), 64-88.
- Brown, C. & Augusta-Scott, T. (2007). *Narrative therapy: Making meaning, making lives*. California: Sage.
- Bryant-Davis, T. (2007). Healing requires recognition: The case for race-based traumatic stress. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *35*, 135-142.
- Bryant-Davis, T., & Ocampo, C. (2005). Racist incident based trauma. *The Counseling Psychologist*. 33(4), 479-500.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014). *Economic news release*. Retrieved September 12, 2014 from http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t02.htm
- Bush, L. V., & Bush, E. C. (2013). God bless the child who got his own: Toward a comprehensive theory for African-American boys and men. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, *37*(1), 1-13.
- Calvert, W. (1997). Protective factors within the family, and their role in fostering resiliency in African-American adolescents. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 4, 110-117.
- Carter, R. T. (2007). Racism and psychological and emotional injury: Recognizing and assessing race-based traumatic stress. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *35*(13), 82-94, doi: 10.1177/0011000006292033
- Constantine, M. (2007). Racial Microaggressions against African American clients in cross-racial counseling relationships. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *54*, 1-16.
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (n.d.). Commission Charge Statistics. Federal Bureau of Investigation (n.d.). Investigation of Hate Crime Statistics.
- Evans, A.M., Carney, J., & Wilkinson, M. (2013). Work-life balance for men: Counseling implications. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 91(4), 436-441.
- Evans, A.M., Kluck, A., Hill, D., Crumley, E., & Turchan, J. (*in press*). Utilizing existential meaning-making as a therapeutic tool for clients affected by poverty. *International Journal of Existential Psychology and Psychotherapy*.
- Franklin, A. J. (1999). Invisibility syndrome and racial identity development in psychotherapy and counseling African American men. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 27(6), 761-793.
- Gerber, M. M., Boals, A., & Schuettler, D. (2011). The unique contributions of positive and negative religious coping to posttraumatic growth and PTSD. *Psychology of Religion And Spirituality*, *3*(4), 298-307. doi:10.1037/a0023016
- Hammond, W.P. (2012). Taking it like a man: Masculine role norms as moderators of the racial discrimination-depressive symptoms association among African American men. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(S2), S232-S241.
- Hammond, W. P. (2010). Psychosocial correlates of medical mistrust among African American men. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45, 87-106.

- Hammond, W. P., & Mattis, J. S. (2005). Being a man about it: Manhood meaning among African American men. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 6, 114-126.
- Hardy, K. (2013). Healing the hidden wounds of racial trauma. *Reclaiming Children & Youth*, 22(1), 24-28.
- Harrell, S. P. (2000). A multidimensional conceptualization of racism-related stress: Implication for the well-being of people of color. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 70(1), 42-47.
- Harris, J. I., Erbes, C. R., Engdahl, B. E., Tedeschi, R. G., Olson, R. H., Winskowski, A. M. M. & McMahill, J. (2010). Coping functions of prayer and posttraumatic growth. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 20(1), 26-38.
- Hoge, E. A., Austin, E. D., & Pollack, M. H. (2007). Resilience: Research evidence and conceptual considerations for posttraumatic stress disorder. *Depression and Anxiety*, 24, 139-152.
- Holden, K. B., McGregor, B. S., Blanks, S. H., & Mahaffey, C. (2012). Psychosocial, socio-cultural, and environmental influences on mental health help-seeking among African-American men. *Journal Of Men's Health*, *9*(2), 63-69. doi:10.1016/j.jomh.2012.03.002
- Hulteen, B., & Wallis, J. (1992). *America's original sin: A study guide on white racism*. Washington, DC: Sojourners.
- Hunter, A., & Davis, J. (1992). Constructing gender: An exploration of Afro-American men's conceptualization of manhood. *Gender and Society*, *6*, 464-479.
- Joseph, S., Murphy, D., & Regel, S. (2012). An affective-cognitive processing model of post-traumatic growth. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 19, 316-325. doi: 10.1002/cpp.1798
- Joseph, S., & Williams, R. (2005). Understanding posttraumatic stress: Theory, reflections, context, and future. *Behavioral and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, *33*, 423–441.
- Karlsen, S., & Nazroo, J. (2002). Relation between racial discrimination, social class, and health among ethnic minority groups. *American Journal of Public Health*, 92(4), 624-631.
- Kivel, B. D. & Johnson, C. W. (2009). Consuming media, making men: Using collective memory work to understand leisure and the construction of masculinity. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 41, 109-133.
- Lander, N.R., & Nahon, D. (2008). Personhood of the therapist in couples therapy: An integrity therapy perspective. *Journal of Couples Therapy*, 9, 141-147.
- Larner, B., & Blow, A. (2011). A model of meaning-making coping and growth in combat veterans. *Review Of General Psychology*, 15(3), 187-197. doi:10.1037/a0024810
- LaVeist, T. A., Nickerson, K. J., & Bowie, J. (2000). Attitudes about racism, medical mistrust, and satisfaction with care among African American and White cardiac patients. *Medical Care Research and Review*, *57*, 146-161.
- Lee. T. (2014). Portrait of a protester in Ferguson Missouri, *MSNBC*, Retrieved: September 12, 2014 from http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/portrait-protester-ferguson-missouri
- Lindstrom, C. M., Cann, A., Calhoun, L. G., & Tedeschi, R. G. (2011). The relationship of core belief challenge, rumination, disclosure, and sociocultural elements to posttraumatic growth. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 5, 50-55. doi:10.1037/a0022030

- Linley, P., & Joseph, S. (2004). Positive Change Following Trauma and Adversity: A Review. *Journal Of Traumatic Stress*, *17*(1), 11-21. doi:10.1023/B:JOTS.0000014671.27856.7e
- Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development*, 71(3), 543-562.
- Morris, B. A., Campbell, M., Dwyer, M., Dunn, J., & Chambers, S. K. (2011). Survivor identity and post-traumatic growth after participating in challenge-based peer-support programs. *The British Psychological Society*, *15*, 660-674.
- Neighbors, H. W., Caldwell, C., Williams, D. R., Nesse, R., Taylor, R., Bullard, K., & Jackson, J. S. (2007). Race, ethnicity, and the use of services for mental disorders: Results from the National Survey of American Life. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 64(4), 485-494. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.64.4.485
- Neighbors, H. W., & Howard, C. S. (1987). Sex differences in professional help seeking among Black adults. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 15, 403-417.
- Park, C. L., Riley, K. E., & Snyder, L. B. (2012). Meaning making coping, making sense, and post-traumatic growth following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. *The Journal Of Positive Psychology*, 7(3), 198-207. doi:10.1080/17439760.2012.671347
- Ponds, K. (2013). The trauma of racism: American's original sin: Reclaiming Children and Youth, 22(2), 22-24.
- Robertson, J. M., & Fitzgerald, L. R. (1992). Overcoming the masculine mystique: Preferences for alternative forms of assistance among men who avoid counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *39*, 240-246.
- Salo, J. A., Qouta, S., & Punamäki, R. (2005). Adult attachment, posttraumatic growth and negative emotions among former political prisoners. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping: An International Journal*, 18(4), 361-378. doi:10.1080/10615800500289524
- Sarason, I. G., Levine, H. M., Basham, R. B., & Sarason, B. R. (1983). Assessing social support: The social support questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44(1), 127-139.
- Sarason, I. G., Shearin, E. N. & Pierce, G. R. (1987). A brief measure of social support: Practical and theoretical implications. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 4(4) 497-510.
- Sawyer, A., & Ayers, S. (2009). Post traumatic growth in women after childbirth. *Psychology and Health*, 24(4), 457-471.
- Schneider, K. T., Hitlan, R. T., & Radhakrishnan, P. (2000). An examination of the nature and correlates of ethnic harassment experiences in multiple contexts. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 3-12.
- Schmidt, S. D., Blank, T. O., Bellizzi, K. M., & Park, C. L. (2012). The relationship of coping strategies, social support, and attachment style with posttraumatic growth in cancer survivors. *Journal Of Health Psychology*, *17*(7), 1033-1040. doi:10.1177/1359105311429203
- Schuettler, D., & Boals, A. (2011). The path to posttraumatic growth versus posttraumatic stress disorder: Contributions of event centrality and coping. *Journal Of Loss and Trauma*, 16(2), 180-194. doi:10.1080/15325024.2010.519273
- Schultz, J. M., Tallman, B. A., & Altmaier, E. M. (2010). Pathways to posttraumatic growth: The contributions of forgiveness and importance of religion and

- spirituality. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 2(2), 104-114. doi:10.1037/a0018454
- Shorter-Gooden, K. (2004). Multiple resistance strategies: How African American women cope with racism and sexism. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 30(3), 406-425.
- Shaw, A., Joseph, S., & Linley, P. (2005). Religion, spirituality, and posttraumatic growth: A systematic review. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 8(1), 1-11. doi:10.1080/1367467032000157981
- Sheikh, A. (2008). Posttraumatic growth in trauma survivors: Implications for practice. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, 21, 85-97.
- Splevins, K., Cohen, K., Bowley, J., & Joseph, S. (2010). Theories of posttraumatic growth: Cross-cultural perspectives. *Journal Of Loss And Trauma*, 15(3), 259-277. doi:10.1080/15325020903382111
- Stockton, H., Hunt, N., & Joseph, S. (2011). Cognitive processing, rumination, and posttraumatic growth. *Journal Of Traumatic Stress*, 24(1), 85-92. doi:10.1002/jts.20606
- Smith, W. A., Hung, M. & Franklin, J. D. (2011). Racial battle fatigue and the miseducation of black men: Racial microaggressions, societal problems, and environmental stress. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 80(1), 63-82.
- Sue, D & Sue, D., (2007). *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice* (5th Ed.). NY: J. Wiley.
- Sue, D. W., Nadal, K. L., Capodilupo, C. M., Lin, A. I., Rivera, D. P., & Torino, G. C. (2008). Racial microaggressions against Black Americans: Implications for counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 86, 330–338.
- Taku, K., Cann, A., Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (2009). Intrusive verses deliberate rumination in posttraumatic growth across US and Japanese samples. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping: An International Journal*, 22(2), 129-136. doi:10.1080/10615800802317841
- Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (1995). *Trauma & transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of suffering*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (1996). The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the positive legacy of trauma. *Journal Of Traumatic Stress*, 9(3), 455-472. doi:10.1002/jts.2490090305
- Tedeschi, R. G., Park, C. L., & Calhoun, L. G. (1998). *Posttraumatic growth: Positive changes in the aftermath of crisis*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (2004). Posttraumatic growth: Conceptual foundations and empirical evidence. *Psychological Inquiry*, *15*, 1–18.
- Triplett, K. N., Tedeschi, R. G., Cann, A., Calhoun, L. G., & Reeve, C. L. (2012). Posttraumatic growth, meaning in life, and life satisfaction in response to trauma. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, And Policy*, *4*(4), 400-410. doi:10.1037/a0024204 U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). *U.S.A quick facts African Americans*. Retrieved from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. (2012). *Mental health and African Americans*. Retrieved from http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/content.aspx?lvl=3&lvlID=9&ID=6474

- Utsey, S. O., Ponterotto, J. G., Reynolds, A. L., Cancelli, A. A. (2000). Racial discrimination, coping, life satisfaction and self-esteem among African Americans. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 78*(1), 72-80.
- Van Slyke, J. (n.d.). Post-traumatic growth. *Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control*, 1-5.
- Verkuyten, M. (1998). Perceived discrimination and self-esteem among ethnic minority adults. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 138, 479-493.
- Vogel, D. L., Heimerdinger-Edwards, S. R., Hammer, J. H., & Hubbard, A. (2011). "Boys don't cry": Examination of the links between endorsement of masculine norms, self-stigma, and help-seeking attitudes for men from diverse backgrounds. *Journal Of Counseling Psychology*, 58(3), 368-382. doi:10.1037/a0023688
- Vogel, D. L., Wester, S. R., Hammer, J. H., & Downing-Matibag, T. M. (2013). Referring men to seek help: The influence of gender role conflict and stigma. *Psychology Of Men & Masculinity*, 15, 60-67. doi:10.1037/a0031761
- Williams, D. R., & Williams-Morris, R. (2000). Racism and mental health: The African American experience. *Ethnicity and Health*, *5*, 243-268.

Author Note

Amanda M. Evans: Auburn University Carrie Hemmings: Auburn University Christopher Burkhalter: Harvard University Virginia Lacy: Auburn University Montgomery

Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Amanda M. Evans, PhD, Assistant Professor, 2084 Haley Center, Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling Auburn University, Auburn, AL 36849, 334-844-7695 or amt0004@auburn.edu.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7729/81.1085

Is The Personal Theoretical? A Critical Incident Analysis of Student Theory Journals

Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, Volume 8, Number 1, Spring 2016

Allison Hrovat, Melissa Luke

Journal entries from 23 masters students enrolled in a counseling theories course were analyzed using Critical Incident methodology to identify students' self-disclosures and connection to counseling theories. Seven different patterns of connecting theoretical information to personal experiences emerged. The authors present a discussion of how the findings and resulting framework can contribute to the teaching of counseling theory and the reflective process of identifying theoretical orientation.

Keywords: counseling theory, theoretical orientation, counselor training, counselor education

The role of theory in counseling practice and its relationship to the identity of the field has consistently divided authors on whether theory has lost some value (e.g. Gerber, 2001), or retains a central role in the practice of counseling and development of counselors (e.g. Cheston, 2000; Hansen, 2006; Norcross & Prochaska, 1983; Spruill & Bensoff, 2000). Additionally, the growing body of process and outcome research and identified common factors supports the claim that the largest percentage of change in therapy can be attributed to the therapeutic relationship and counselor traits (e.g. Grencavage & Norcross, 1990; Lambert & Barley, 2001), underscoring the value of therapeutic common factors shared across theories over the strengths of individual theories. Theory nevertheless remains an essential part of counselor training, as highlighted by the inclusion of theory as part of the common core curricular experiences outlined in the 2016 Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Standards. The present study adds to the limited but important body of literature on the teaching and learning of counseling theories. Specifically, we focus on the processes employed by

graduate level counseling students in integrating personal experiences with their growing understanding of counseling theories.

Learning Counseling Theory and Adopting Theoretical Orientation

Theory in counselor education. Among the many requirements identified as necessary to the development of professional counselors, the CACREP (2016) standards reference counseling theories across several of the common core curricular areas, including social and cultural diversity (CACREP, 2016, II.F.2.b, p.10) human growth and development (CACREP, 2016, II.F.3.b-d, p.10) helping relationships (CACREP 2016, II.F.5.a, p.11), and group work (CACREP 2016, II.F.6.a, p. 12). CACREP (2016) further directs that programs are to include "processes for aiding students in developing a personal model of counseling" (CACREP, 2016, II.F.5.n, p. 12).

These standards reflect wider agreement surrounding the value of understanding theory to effective counseling practice (e.g.; Granello & Hazler, 2000; Hansen, 2006; Norcross & Prochaska, 1983; Stoltenberg, McNeill, & Delworth, 1988). Having a theoretical framework can help counselors organize clinical data and provide guidance for appropriate interventions (Hansen, 2006). Theoretical orientation has been identified as one of the key growth areas for counseling students in the supervision experience (Stoltenberg et al., 1988). Additionally, learning counseling theory has been viewed as helping students move from dualistic to multiplistic thinking (Granello & Hazler, 1998), thus promoting a shift from right-and-wrong to more nuanced conceptualizations.

Modern and postmodern views of theory and teaching theory. To date, no national study has systematically examined how theories are being taught, or which instructional methods yield different results. A review of the literature reveals a familiar modern/postmodern divide

among the different methods of instruction described. The modernist approach, thought to be the most commonly applied pedagogical strategy, includes didactic instruction that emphasizes the introduction of terminology, historical origins, and important concepts, likely introducing experiential learning opportunities after key concepts have been introduced (Guiffrida, 2005; Rigazio-Digilio, 2001).

Several authors have identified limitations to the modernist approach and have proposed adaptations. Dollarhide, Smith, and Lemberger (2007) suggested implementing Transparent Counseling Pedagogy (TCP), which was designed to provide a realistic clinical demonstration in the classroom, promote student involvement for socially constructed learning, and make transparent the counselor's thinking. Cheston (2000) offered another adaptation through the introduction of the "ways paradigm," which helps scaffold understanding of the many counseling theories and techniques by organizing them around a framework of three principles: a way of being, a way of understanding, and a way of intervening. Brubaker, Puig, Reese, and Young (2010) provided yet another adaptation through the use of a social justice paradigm (emancipatory communitarianism), which infused the traditional framework with social justice, constructivist, and multicultural principles, promoting reflection on the cultural strengths and limitations of students' chosen theoretical orientation.

Other authors have suggested postmodern alternatives to traditional pedagogical strategies. Spruill and Benshoff (2000) critiqued the modernist approach for failing to incorporate students' life experiences before graduate training, and for not considering counselor developmental stages. They suggested a constructivist process of integrating knowledge and training along with values and beliefs to build towards a personal theory. Similarly, in the Emergence Model (Guiffrida, 2005), students are taught to observe and reflect upon their own

natural tendencies in real-world practice, considering the strengths and limitations of the helping instincts that come naturally to them (Guiffrida, 2005). Lastly, Hansen (2014) challenged the modernist approach of classifying theories according to their common features, contending that this is of little value to counseling practitioners, and proposed incorporating a model of theory categorization that focuses on the various uses of theory.

Identification of theoretical orientation. It has often been suggested that a student's early identification of theoretical orientation can be beneficial. Aligning oneself with a developed theory can provide a sense of confidence and competence to counseling students who often experience significant anxiety that can negatively impact their work with clients (e.g. Granello & Hazler, 2000). Conversely, it has also been cautioned that encouragement towards early identification of theoretical orientation may place students at risk of theoretical foreclosure by preventing them from first exploring their own perspectives of human growth and change (Bernard, 1992).

Balancing those perspectives, several authors have viewed theoretical orientation as part of a larger developmental process. In their qualitative study, Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) identified themes indicating that as the process of professional individuation evolves, individuals are able to determine what is most congruent with their sense of self, resulting in a core set of theoretical orientations. Similarly, Watts (1993) proposed that personal theory development occurs in four stages, two of which occur during graduate training. In the first stage of exploration, students take internal inventories of attitudes and beliefs while also exploring the major theories of counseling. In the second stage, the examination stage, students choose one or two theories most closely aligned with their own values and beliefs as the base of one's personal theory. Finally, in their grounded theory study, Auxier, Hughes, and Kline (2003) included

theoretical information as part of a larger recycling identity formation process where learning experiences are integrated into students' process of identifying, clarifying, and reclarifying their professional identities as counselors.

Factors in choice of theoretical orientation. There is a considerable body of research surrounding factors related to one's choice of theoretical orientation. Research has shown epistemic style and views on feedback (Neimeyer, Prichard, Lyddon & Sherrard, 2001), personality traits (e.g. Buckman & Barker, 2010; Erickson, 1993; Fredrickson, 1993; Varlami & Bayne, 2007), cognitive style (Barrio Minton & Myers, 2008; Lochner & Melchert, 1997), philosophical assumptions (Buckman & Barker, 2010; Murdock, Banta, Stromseth, Viene, & Brown, 1998; Norcross & Prochaska, 1983), and interpersonal control (Murdock et al., 1998) as related to choice of theoretical orientation. Additionally, one study showed that a theory's ability to explain one's own problems was found to have a stronger relationship to theoretical choice than client factors (Norcross & Prochaska, 1983). A connection between interpersonal experiences—such as one's relationship with a supervisor, therapist, or teacher—and theoretical orientation selection has also been found (Buckman & Barker, 2010; Steiner, 1978).

In studies specifically focused on counseling students, some results have contradicted those represented in the broader literature. While personality traits have been found to be related to choice of theoretical orientation, amongst beginning counseling students the same relationship was not indicated. In a study of 132 students enrolled in a counseling theories course, Freeman, Hayes, Kuck, and Taub (2007) found no significant relationship between a variety of personality traits and theoretical orientation preference. In contrast to their hypothesis, Murdock et al. (1998) did not find that supervisor theoretical orientation was related to student's choice of theoretical orientation.

The Missing Link: Purpose of the Present Study

While a thorough review of the literature offers insight into the varying strategies for teaching theory, and the factors related to choice of theoretical orientation, there is no research bridging the two by exploring the process through which students make sense of theoretical information. It has been proposed that counselors are most effective when operating within a theoretical framework that is consistent with their personal philosophy, worldview, and experiences (e.g. Buckman & Barker, 2010; Fear & Woolfe, 1999; Murdock et al., 1998), yet there is a lack of research exploring the work that students do to begin making those determinations.

Research Question. The purpose of this study was to identify the processes that students employ in applying theory to personal experiences through analysis of journals written in a counseling theories course. The research was guided by one primary question: how do students apply theory to their personal experiences?

Methodology

Participants

Participants were 23 graduate students in a counseling theory course at a northeastern university, and included 18 women and five men. The racial makeup of the sample included Caucasian (n=17), African American (n=3), Indian-American (n=1), and international (n=2; Korean and Turkish) participants. The majority of students in this sample were first-semester matriculated students in a graduate program in counselor education. The participants in this sample ranged from 22 to 38 years of age.

Design

Critical incident technique. Increasingly, researchers in counseling have implemented the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) (e.g. Kiweewa, Gilbride, Luke, & Seward, 2013; Trepal, Bailie, & Leeth, 2010; Wong, Wong, & Ishiyama, 2012). While initially introduced as a technique intended to examine behavioral processes, Woolsey (1986) recognized CIT's applicability to counseling psychology research due to the method's flexibility in encompassing qualities or attributes; its ability to explore differences or turning points, and its exploratory capabilities in the early stages of building theories or models. Though CIT is a deliberate process composed of specific procedures, from its inception Flanagan (1954) contended that CIT "should be thought of as a flexible set of principles that must be modified and adapted to meet the specific situation at hand" (p. 335). The inherent flexibility of CIT is seen in its applicability to a wide range of topics across disciplines (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005).

CIT is a qualitative research method that consists of a set of procedures for collecting, analyzing, and reporting observed incidents of special significance to participants in a clearly defined environment/activity (Flanagan, 1954). It involves collection of brief, written, reports of actions in response to explicit situations of problems in defined fields. An incident may be considered critical when the action taken contributed to an effective or ineffective outcome (Woolsey, 1986). The collection and subsequent analysis of incidents in CIT facilitates the application of those observations to solving practical problems and developing principles or theories (Flanagan, 1954). CIT has evolved from exclusive focus on direct observations to retrospective self-report, and from task analysis to examining personal experiences, psychological constructs, and emotions (Butterfield et al., 2005).

Procedure in CIT. Flanagan (1954), proposed five steps in conducting a critical incidents study. These include: a) a clear and concise statement of the purpose or aim of the study; b) development of plans and specifications for the types of data to be collected; c) collecting the data; d) analyzing the data; and e) plans for interpreting and reporting results. Flanagan (1954) identified the data analysis as the most difficult and important step of the process, stating that the goal is to create a useful categorization scheme of the data while also "sacrificing as little as possible of their comprehensiveness, specificity, and validity" (p. 344). As such, Butterfield et al. (2005) additionally outlined a three-step process to analyzing the data. First, a frame of reference based on the use of the data is determined. Second, categories are formulated inductively using insight, experience, and judgment. Third, a decision on the level of specificity to be used in reporting the data is made.

Strengths of CIT. Specific to the present study, CIT offered several methodological strengths not found with other designs. First, as the name implies, CIT allows for explicit focus on identified critical incidents. In this present study, the authors wanted to specifically look at students' self-disclosure and their application of theory. The CIT methodology provided a clear process for isolating those incidents and analyzing them within a meaningful frame.

Second, as previously mentioned, data analysis in CIT is conducted by forming categories that emerge from the data and determining the scope (general to specific) of those categories (Butterfield et al., 2005; Creswell, 1998). Unlike other forms of qualitative coding that seek to identify themes, the use of CIT in psychological research has highlighted its strength in identifying processes that can contribute to the generation of models of theories (Butterfield et al., 2005).

Finally, in CIT analysis the researchers establish categories with both operational definitions and self-descriptive titles (Butterfield et al., 2005; Creswell, 1998). This allows for the overlay of the identified categories onto similar processes. Given the relative lack of literature on the topic of the current study, the authors sought a methodology that could produce a frame that might prove useful to the process of educating counseling students in theory.

Methodological considerations. As with any methodology, there are considerations when using CIT, two of which are related to the present study. First, Flanagan (1954) stated that the expertise of the researchers is an important consideration, as their skill at identifying the critical incident and working to analyze it is essential to the process. As such, it is recommended that at least one researcher have experience with CIT (Britten, Borgen, & Wiggins, 2012). Second, Butterfield et al. (2005), in their meta-analysis on the use of CIT for psychological research, found few consistent standards around credibility and trustworthiness checks for researchers conducting CIT research. In reviewing those checks that were present in the literature, they made several recommendations dependent upon the specific application of CIT. Relevant to this study, submitting the tentative categories to another expert for review (Butterfield et al., 2005); asking an independent rater to place critical incidents into the tentatively established categories (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954); and comparing tentative categories against the extant literature for theoretical validity (Butterfield et al., 2005) emerged as the most appropriate checks.

Procedure

Data was collected across the span of a semester in a theories course taught by the second author in a CACREP accredited counselor education program in the northeastern United States. As part of the course requirements, students were asked to write weekly journals, which would be collected at two different points (midterm and final) during the semester. The theories course was taught using a text that focused on a different major theory each chapter. As such, students were asked in their journals to respond to the following questions related to the theory discussed that week:

- 1. What did I learn about myself from this theory?
- 2. What specific concept struck me most deeply from this theory?
- 3. What might I do differently now as a counselor, since I know more about myself?

At each of the collection points (midterm and final), the instructor (second author) provided some feedback to students, generally in the form of questions to promote deeper thinking, or validating statements about what the student had shared. While the entries varied greatly in depth of sharing and application of theory, many students engaged in personal sharing in a way that was structured around the prompts provided and not simply stream-of-consciousness. The resulting data set consisted of 230 journal entries. Each entry was approximately two typed and double spaced pages long, totaling 571 pages. The first author removed identifying information, compiling the entries into one document.

In this study, students were asked to self-report on how they could use the theories covered in class and the readings to better understand themselves. No training was provided to student participants about how this should be done since, as Woolsey (1986) noted, use of self-report renders training of persons unnecessary, though there may be a need to orient participants

to the activity. Students were oriented to this activity through assignment guidelines. Due to the nature of the assignment, students self-selected which personal experiences to share. Thus, in accordance with CIT, while the authors did not absolutely control the specific types of situations under observation, the guidelines communicated that personal reflection would be expected.

Researchers

Subjectivity is inherent in qualitative research and in order to establish validity it is essential that researchers acknowledge the influences on the data collection and analysis (Choudhuri, Glauser, & Peregoy, 2004). In CIT, researchers must examine at each stage in the process what biases they might have introduced into the analysis (Flanagan, 1954). The authors discussed extensively their respective and collective positions and preconceived notions related to this project. Both authors were white females in positions of power relative to the participants (the first author was a doctoral student at the time of this study; the second a tenured professor). Both authors had some contact with the participants in the study, the first author as teaching assistant in other courses and supervisor to two students in the sample, and the second author as the instructor of the course in which this data was collected.

Both authors had experience working with theory in clinical and academic settings and processed their own observation of the theory-practice gap. The first author has worked in community clinical settings as a counselor and supervisor and has had less experience in the role of counselor educator. The second author has had clinical experience working in schools and in the community as a counselor and supervisor, and as a tenured faculty member who has taught counseling theory for multiple semesters.

Before analyzing of the data, both authors recognized a shared bias towards a process of reflection deeper than whether a student likes or dislikes a certain theory. They discussed their

beliefs of what students "should" do for this assignment, with a shared preference for students sharing a personal disclosure and then examining that disclosure through the lens of theory. The second author additionally identified that her initial reaction to the data was that some students did the assignment "wrong." The authors' shared awareness of their positionality and bias informed subsequent choices of trustworthiness checks in the data analysis. Lastly, the second author had experience with CIT methodology on other research projects, and as such served as research mentor to the first author.

The researchers closely followed the ethical research standards outlined by the American Counseling Association and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision throughout the analysis process. An exemption was granted by the Institutional Review Board for the data used in this study, as it was collected during the process of teaching. Thus, although students were informed ahead of time that their work might be used in future research, students in this study were not given the option to opt out. To preserve the anonymity of students as much as possible, the first researcher, who had not been involved in the course where these journals were collected, removed all identifying information from the data set. The data were collected about one year before this analysis, thus allowing for separation between the second researcher's evaluation of the journals and the analysis of the data.

Data coding and analysis

The first author initiated the identification of critical incidents by reading through the entire data set and highlighting the critical incidents. According to Flanagan (1954), the criteria for selecting critical incidents is generally thought to be: 1) they consist of antecedent or contextual information, 2) they contain a description of the experience itself, and 3) they describe the outcome of the incident. Flanagan (1954) also advocated flexibility of the approach to meet

the needs of a specific research question therefore, the authors agreed upon inclusion criteria relevant to this study. To be identified as a critical incident, the student must: 1) describe a personal experience or other self-disclosure, and 2) describe the outcome, or the application of theory to that experience or self-disclosure. Using these criteria, 313 individual critical incidents were identified. In order to triangulate their coding procedures, the second author randomly reviewed and coded several journals for critical incidents, in order to affirm consensus on what constituted a critical incident.

In several cases, students did not provide a self-disclosure, instead simply stating facts or a perspective about the theory. Conversely, some students provided a self-disclosure with no connection to theory. An intentional decision was made that the absence of either self-disclosure or connection to theory would still be considered a critical incident. The authors determined that excluding instances of non-self-disclosure or non-connection to theory would likely miss an important process represented within this data set. Further, the authors decided that eliminating those instances based on a view that the student had "done the assignment wrong" could introduce bias into the analysis.

Critical incidents were divided into 1) self-disclosure, and 2) connection to theory and were input into a two-column chart. Critical incident pairs were cut into separate slips of paper to allow for manual sorting. The authors together sorted an initial sample of approximately one-third of the incidents into categories, and identified six tentative categories which they labeled using a narrative description of the process being used. At this stage, the authors checked these tentative categories against the scant literature on this topic for theoretical validity. The tentative categories seemed consistent with the factors related to theoretical choice identified in the literature. The first author also reviewed the tentative categories with other counseling

professionals in a research seminar format. The authors subsequently added a seventh category, to distinguish between expressing an affective or cognitive response and stating a formed opinion (Table 1; processes 5 and 6).

With the tentative categories established, the first author then independently sorted the remaining incidents. The second author was then given a sample of the incidents to sort and compare to the first author's categorization. Finally, in accordance with the CIT trustworthiness checks previously described, an independent reviewer was given the category headings, operational definitions and a random sample of incidents to sort. Inter-rater reliability was found between the independent reviewer and the authors' categorizations. Peer debriefing was employed through discussing preliminary findings at several professional conferences.

Findings

Since classification of incidents according to CIT must be guided by the intended outcome and use of the study in question (Butterfield et al. 2005; Flanagan 1954; Woolsey, 1986), all identified categories and their headings reflected a particular process through which students applied theoretical information to their personal experiences. From the analysis, the following seven processes were identified and labeled: personal belief is lens; theory is lens; theory provides solutions; personal experience is lens; personal response influences theoretical application; opinion about theory influences theoretical application; no self-disclosure provided. The seven final categories were mutually exclusive, meaning that a single critical incident could not be classified into two categories. In keeping with CIT, the self-descriptive titles are accompanied by operational definitions below and in the accompanying table (Table 1).

Table 1

Application of theory to personal experiences

Process Number	Process of applying theory to self- disclosure (Self-descriptive title)	Number of critical incidents	Description (Operational definition)	Examples (Narrative/ summary of critical incidents)
1	Theory is lens	113	Student shares a personal experience and examines this disclosure through the lens of specific theory.	Student shares that s/he is going through a divorce. Student applies principles from existentialism to recognize that s/he can find meaning in a painful experience.
2	Personal experience is lens	93	Student shares a personal <i>experience</i> and critiques the theory through the lens of this personal disclosure.	Student shares that s/he did not have a father growing up. Student states that, based on this, s/he doesn't see how Freud's theories make any sense, especially since the Oedipal and Electra complex can't apply to people like him/her.
3	No self-disclosure provided	44	No self-disclosure provided; student simply states or summarizes facts and information about theory	"Adlerian theory includes the importance of birth order."/ "Freudian theory is very focused on the subconscious."
4	Personal belief is lens	38	Student identifies a personal <i>value or belief</i> and uses the belief to confirm or refute specific theory.	"I am not religious at all, and because existentialism seems to be rooted in religious beliefs I don't think it would be helpful to people."
5	Personal response influences theoretical application	11	Student gives an observation about the theory and an affective or cognitive response; uses that response to affirm or reject specific theory.	Student expresses feeling "irked" by learning the history behind RCT, and thus not open to the theory. / Student expresses feeling "disgusted" by her/his perception that everything about Freudian psychoanalysis is sexist, and paints women in a very ridiculous light.
6	Opinion influences theoretical application	7	Student does not provide a self-	"I like the optimism of solution-focused

			disclosure; instead states opinion about the specific theory (or elements of the theory).	therapy."/ "Adlerian theory does not have anything new to offer."/ "Freudian theory can be used to justify child abuse, which is dangerous."
7	Theory provides solutions	7	Student shares a personal problem and applies specific theory to generate possible solutions.	Student shares that s/he procrastinates in grad school; applies behavioral interventions to create a study plan.

Table1.

Process 1: Theory is lens- Share personal disclosure/ examine disclosure through theoretical lens. In 113 incidents, students engaged in a process of describing personal experiences and using the theory to explain or examine those experiences. Students who applied this process most closely met the stated goals of the assignment and generally expressed an awareness of a limitation, strength, or possibility about the theory learned through their application of it. For example, a student shared that s/he experiences chronic anxiety. Applying the lens of cognitive behavioral theory, the student states that her anxiety is the result of dysfunctional thinking.

Process 2: Personal experience is lens- Share personal experience/ examine theory through the lens of the disclosure. Different from the first process identified, in 93 incidents students employed a process of sharing a personal experience and examining the theory through the lens of that disclosure. Students used their personal experiences and worldview to either affirm or discard the theory's merits and utility. For example, a student shared that s/he was raised by a single parent and uses this disclosure to critique psychoanalytic theory.

Process 3: No self-disclosure provided. In 44 incidents, students did not present a self-disclosure and instead stated facts about a theory. These incidents represent students who showed ability to absorb and repeat facts about theory, but did not demonstrate application of the theory

or reflection on theoretical concepts. Examples of this included students presenting detailed information about the core constructs of the theory, often citing the course text, with no application to the self.

Process 4: Personal belief is lens- Identify a personal belief, use that belief to confirm or refute theory. Of the 313 incidents identified in the data, 38 represented a firmly held and stated belief or value, rather than a personal experience as directed. Students in this category refrained from describing something that they learned through the theory, using their belief to either confirm or refute the utility of the theory. Frequently, the critical incidents in this category focused on one specific aspect of a theory, such as a student who stated that s/he believes that all people are innately bad, and subsequently disagrees with person-centered therapy.

Process 5: Personal response influences theoretical application- Give an observation about the theory that may reflect an inaccurate or incomplete understanding / express an affective or cognitive response. In 11 incidents, students expressed strong affective and/ or cognitive responses to aspects of theories, and did not move past their response to further application. Students engaging in this process appeared to be limited in their reflectivity due to their strong initial responses. An example of this process is a student who expressed being disgusted by the fact that psychoanalysis paints women in a very ridiculous light.

Process 6: Opinion influences theoretical application- No self-disclosure provided; state opinions of elements of theory. In seven incidents students expressed only an opinion about a theory, with no connection back to oneself. Different from Process 6, incidents in this category did not represent an emotional or cognitive response, but a formed opinion. Incidents in this category expressed both positive (for example, "I like the optimism of solution-focused

therapy") and negative opinions (for example, "Adlerian theory does not have anything new to offer"), with no further application of the theory or connection to anything personal.

Process 7: Theory provides solutions. Share a personal problem or issue/ use theory to generate possible solutions. In seven incidents, students cited a current or ongoing concern in their life and used the theory as a means of generating possible courses of action or solutions. In doing so, a majority of students who employed this process were able to come to a different understanding of the possible applications of a theory in promoting change. For example, a student who described a pattern of procrastination applied behavioral techniques to generate strategies for change.

Discussion

The findings from this study both support and challenge the existing literature in several significant ways. Consistent with developmental perspectives on counselor development (e.g. Stoltenberg et al., 1988), the variety of processes employed by students in this sample reflects a range of development, from dichotomous to multiplistic. This range appears to support the first two stages that Watts (1993) proposed as being the aspects of theoretical orientation development that occur during graduate training. Students in this sample are both beginning the process of self-reflection and are starting to identify the theoretical perspectives with which they identify. The findings of this study also support a post-modern interpretation of theory, in that students used theory as a lens through which to view experiences, and used their experiences as a lens through which to view theory.

Findings from this study raise questions about both of the two leading schools of thought surrounding the process of learning theory and developing theoretical orientation. While modernist approaches are crafted around a didactic presentation of various theories from which

students will then choose, the findings from this study highlight the importance of guiding students through a process of reflection, as evidenced by the tendency of some students to accept or discard a theory based on one or a few aspects of the theory. Conversely, constructivist approaches advocating a process of building theoretical orientation from personal experience to developed theory may fail to guide students through the process of recognizing how the lens of experience selectively enhances and/ or reduces what they attend to, as evidenced by the critical incidents that used personal experience or belief to affirm or refute a theory. Thus it would seem that this research supports the use of an integrated constructivist pedagogical method similar to that of Spruill and Benshoff (2000), which includes an introduction to established counseling theories, along with an exploration of values and beliefs to build towards a personal theory.

It struck the authors that current practices for teaching theory could benefit from the inclusion of the principles inherent in learning theories. Ranging from early beliefs that learning is an incremental process of trial and error through active engagement with stimuli (Thorndike, 1923) to more recent perspectives advocating the use of developmentally-guided curricula that "spiral" around the same information at varying points across learning, each time becoming deeper in what is asked of the learner (Bruner, 1977). Learning theories could provide a framework for deeper exploration of developing theoretical orientation, not only in the theories course but across the counselor education curricula.

The taxonomy resulting from this study can be directly used as a pedagogical and supervisory tool to support students in identifying and reflecting upon their own processes. By providing a framework that normalizes all response patterns, instructors can aid students in exploring their approach to learning and applying theory, highlighting aspects of their own philosophy and worldview (Fear and Wolfe, 1999), and identity development (Auxier et al.,

2003). This, in turn, can help to create a foundation for exploring post-modern applications of theory related to self-awareness (Guiffrida, 2005) and social justice (Brubaker et al., 2010).

While the applicability of this study to counseling practice may be less obvious than that to counselor education and supervision, Watts' (1993) proposed model describes an ongoing process of integration and exploration of one's theoretical orientation. Similar to the classroom intervention described above, practicing counselors could use this taxonomy to examine their own statements of why they practice from their chosen theoretical orientation.

Strengths and Limitations

This study is valuable for its focus on the previously unexplored processes students use to apply theory to their personal experiences (and vice versa), and is the first study to date that has sought to elucidate this process. The resulting taxonomy offers a tool that both counselor educators and students can apply in order to illuminate and classify their process. In doing so, students and counselor educators can identify aspects that help or hinder their process of exploring theory and developing theoretical orientation. As Woosley (1986) stated, CIT can be helpful in identifying and classifying turning-point moments, and the application of those classifications to others' process can help promote similar developmental moments.

This study also presents several limitations. Related to participant recruitment this study included only participants within one institution and one theory class instructor, thus limiting the range of theory learning experiences present in the sample. However, the semester-long examination of personal experiences through theory did allow for a sizeable data set that afforded the authors a large number of critical incidents. Additionally, the sample is overwhelmingly Caucasian, and as such may represent a limited range of worldviews. With regards to data collection and analysis, the method used to compile and analyze data did not

allow for analysis of developmental growth within individual students or among the group as a whole across the semester. Future research can examine a similar student learning process longitudinally, perhaps employing a time-series design to the examination of critical incidents.

The fact that the second author was also the instructor of the course potentially biased her view of the data, and as such even more expansive efforts towards data triangulation could have strengthened the analysis. This research project used a similar data collection method as previous studies (e.g. Clingerman & Bernard, 2004; Goodrich & Luke, 2010; Ishii, Gilbride & Stensrud, 2009) wherein course documents were later analyzed. However, since the data was originally collected in an evaluative context, this could have influenced the level and nature of the students' disclosures. Additionally, the second researcher's previous connection to the course wherein the data was originally collected may have influenced her perception of the data, hence a coding team was always used.

Conclusion

This study provides a preliminary framework for analyzing the processes employed by students when asked to apply theory to personal experiences. The categories identified illuminate seven different processes. It is clear from the results of this study that acquiring theoretical knowledge alone does not allow for exploration of what one's theoretical preferences say about them, their beliefs, and their blind spots. Alternately, when students are able to do so, the use of theory as a frame to examine personal experiences leads to a deeper level of reflection about oneself as well as the identified theory. As such, it seems as though theories courses could benefit from the inclusion of both modern and postmodern pedagogical strategies. The use of the seven processes as means to normalize students' experiences, while also offering a pedagogical and/or supervisory tool, has the potential to broaden students' 'natural' means of responding.

This research makes room for further exploration into this topic. Given the growing use of discourse analysis in counselor education, researchers may wish to explore how students use various discourse markers within each of the identified processes, For example, exploring students' use of the connectives "and" or "but" as discourse markers can serve to either connect two facts or, as is likely the case in the data in this study, a link between a fact and another kind of speech act (e.g. a perlocutionary, or persuasive, act) (Schiffrin, 1987). Additionally, future studies applying these identified processes to a larger or more diverse sample would perhaps allow for a quantitative analysis of qualitative data. The use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with students could access richer data about their experiences.

To examine this process quantitatively, future research might conduct a factor analysis, starting with the factors identified in prior research with counselors including epistemic style and views on feedback (Neimeyer, Prichard, Lyddon & Sherrard, 2001), personality traits (e.g. Buckman & Barker, 2010; Erickson, 1993; Fredrickson, 1993), cognitive style (Lochner & Melchert, 1997), philosophical assumptions (Buckman & Barker, 2010; Murdock et al., 1998; Norcross & Prochaska, 1983), and interpersonal control (Murdock et al., 1998). Because of the well-documented developmental process of counselor education, future studies into this topic employing a longitudinal design could contribute to this growing body of literature. Lastly, investigations into the processes through which counselor educators and supervisors navigate their own theoretical orientation development would illuminate a different aspect of this process.

References

- Auxier, C.R., Hughes, F.R., & Kline, W.B. (2003). Identity development in counselors-in-training. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, 43, 25-38.
- Barrio Minton, C., & Myers, J. (2008). Cognitive style and theoretical orientation: Factors affecting intervention style interest and use. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 30, 4, 330-344.
- Bernard, J.M. (1992). The challenge of psychotherapy-based supervision: Making the pieces fit. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *31*, 232-237.
- Britten, L., Borgen, W., & Wiggins, M. (2012). Self-awareness of dual roles when using the CIT (Critical Incident Technique): Opening Pandora's box? *Psychology Research*, 2, 1, 52-63.
- Brubaker, M.D., Puig, A., Reese, R.F., & Young, J. (2010). Integrating social justice into counseling theories pedagogy: A case example. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, 50, 88-102.
- Bruner, J. (1960). The process of education. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Buckman, J. & Barker, C. (2010). Therapeutic orientation preferences in trainee clinical psychologists: Personality or training? *Psychotherapy Research*, 20, 3, 247-258.
- Butterfield, L.D., Borgen, W.A., Amundson, N.E., & Maglio, A.T. (2005). Fifty years of the Critical Incident Technique: 1954-2004 and beyond. *Qualitative Research*, 5, 475-497.
- Chell, E. (1998). Critical incident technique. In G. Symon and C. Cassell (Eds.), *Qualitative Methods and Analysis in Organizational Research: A Practical Guide* (51-72). London: Sage.
- Cheston, S.E. (2000). A new paradigm for teaching counseling theory and practice. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *39*, 254-269.
- Choudhuri, D., Glauser, A., & Peregoy, J. (2004). Guidelines for writing a qualitative manuscript for the *Journal of Counseling & Development*. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 82, 443-446.
- Clingerman, T. L., & Bernard, J. M. (2004). An investigation of the use of e-mail as a supplemental modality for clinical supervision. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 44, 82–95.
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). (2016). CACREP accreditation manual: 2016 standards. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dollarhide, C.T., Smith, A.T., & Lemberger, M.E. (2007). Counseling made transparent: Pedagogy for a counseling theories course. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 46, 4, 242-253.
- Erickson, D. B. (1993). The relationship between personality type and preferred counseling model. *Journal of Psychological Type*, 27, 39–41.
- Fear, R. & Wolfe, R. (1999). The personal and professional development of the counsellor: The relationship between personal philosophy and theoretical orientation. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, 12, 3, 253-262.
- Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The critical incident technique. *Psychological Bulletin*, 51(4), 327-358.
- Fredrickson, C. G. (1993). Psychological type and preferred counseling model characteristics in undergraduate students. *Journal of Psychological Type*, 25, 48–53.

- Freeman, M.S., Hayes, B.G., Kuch, T.H., & Taub, G. (2007). Personality: A predictor of theoretical orientation of students enrolled in a counseling theories course. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 46, 254-265.
- Gerber, S. (2001). Where has our theory gone? Learning theory and intentional intervention. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 7, 282-291.
- Goodrich, K. M., & Luke, M. (2010). The experiences of school counselors-in-training in group work with LGTQ students. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 35*, 143–159.
- Granello, D. H., & Hazler, R. J. (1998). A developmental rationale for curriculum order and teaching styles in counselor education programs. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 38, 89-105.
- Grencavage, L. M., & Norcross, J. C. (1990). Where are the commonalities among the therapeutic common factors? *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 21, 372–378.
- Guiffrida, D.A. (2005). The emergence model: An alternative pedagogy for facilitating self-reflection and theoretical fit in counseling students. *Counselor Education and Supervision* 44, 3, 201-213.
- Hansen, J. T. (2006). Counseling theories within a postmodernist epistemology: New roles for theories in counseling practice. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 84, 291-297.
- Hansen, J.T. (2014). Connecting theories to practice: A model for categorizing theories according to use. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling*, *36*, 384-394.
- Ishii, H., Gilbride, D., & Stensrud, R. (2009). Students' internal reactions to a one-weel cultural immersion trip: A qualitative analysis of student journals. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 37, 1, 15-27.
- Kiweewa, J.M., Gilbride, D.D., Luke, M., & Seward, D.X. (2013). Endorsement of growth factors in experiential training groups. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 38,1,* 68-93.
- Lambert, M.J. & Barley, D.E. (2001) Special issue: Empirically Supported Therapy Relationships: Summary Report of the Division 29 Task Force. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 38, 4. 357-361
- Lochner, B. & Melchert, T. (1997). Relationship of cognitive style and theoretical orientation to psychology interns' preferences for supervision. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 44, 2, 256-260.
- Murdock, N.L., Banta, J., Stromseth, J., Viene, D., & Brown, M. (1998). Joining the club: factors related to choice of theoretical orientation. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 11, 1, 63-78.
- Neimeyer, G., Prichard, S., Lyddon, W. & Sherrard, P. (2001). The role of epistemic style in counseling preference and orientation. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 71, 515-523.
- Norcross, J.C., & Prochaska, J.O. (1983). Clinicians' theoretical orientations: Selection, utilization, and efficacy. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 14, 2, 197-208.
- Rigazio-Digilio, S.A. (2001). Postmodern counseling theories. In Locke, D.C., Myers, J.E., & Herr, E.L. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Counseling* (pp. 197-218). New York: Sage.)
- Schiffrin, Deborah, 1987. Discourse markers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Skovholt, T. M., & Ronnestad, M. H. (1992). Themes in therapist and counselor development. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 70, 505–516.
- Spruill, D.A., & Benshoff, J.M. (2000). Helping beginning counselors develop a personal theory of counseling. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 40, 70-80.

- Steiner, G. L. (1978). A survey to identify factors in therapists' selection of a therapeutic orientation. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice, 15,* 371–374.
- Stoltenberg, C.D., McNeill, B., & Delworth, U. (1998). *IDM supervision: An integrated developmental model of supervising counselors and therapists*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Thorndike, Edward L. (1923). Education Psychology: Briefer course. New York: Routledge.
- Trepal, H.C., Bailie, J., & Leeth, C. (2010). Critical incidents in practicum supervision: Supervisees' perspectives. Journal of Professional Counseling, Practice, Theory, and Research. 38, 1. 28-38.
- Varlami, E. & Bayne, R. (2007). Psychological type and counseling psychology trainees' choice of counseling orientation. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, 24, 4, 361-373.
- Watts, R.E. (1993). Developing a personal theory of counseling. *Tennessee Counseling Association Journal*, 21, 85-95.
- Wong, L. C. J., Wong, P. T. P., & Ishiyama, I. F. (2013). What Helps and What Hinders in Cross-Cultural Clinical Supervision: A Critical Incident Study. *The Counseling Psychologist*. 41(1), 66-85.
- Woolsey, L. (1986). The Critical Incident Technique: An innovative method of research. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 20, 242-254.

Author Note

Allison Hrovat: Syracuse University Melissa Luke: Syracuse University

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Allison Hrovat at *hrovata@strose.edu*

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7729/81.1084

Factors Related to Enrollment in a Counseling Program

Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, Volume 8, Number 1, Spring 2016

Tyler Wilkinson, John McCarthy

Little is known about economic factors associated with a student's decision to enroll into a graduate-level counseling program. A pilot survey was conducted with 101 graduate students at a Northeastern, CACREP-accredited counseling program. The results of this study indicate that accreditation, tuition costs, and geographical proximity of the program were important factors in the decision to enroll in their graduate counseling program. Also, students with undergraduate student loan debt report higher levels of anxiety over debt upon entering a graduate-level counseling program.

Keywords: Professional advocacy, economic decision-making, graduate student enrollment

Graduate education entails personal and professional commitment sacrifices, and economic costs. However, it appears that little is known about the economic picture of students in Counseling programs and, more specifically, if and how different financial factors influenced their decision to apply and enroll in a graduate program. Various researchers have investigated selection of entry into other academic domains, both graduate and undergraduate, including nursing (Scanlon, 2008), medicine (James, Ferguson, Powis, Symonds, & Yates, 2008), business (Punj & Staelin, 1978), and psychology (Stewart, Hill, Stewart, Bimler, & Kirkland, 2005).

A broader review of the financial situations of students, both undergraduate and graduate-level, reveals surprisingly few studies on this topic. Ramirez (2013) interviewed 24 individuals of Latino descent who were in or had recently completed doctoral programs, and found that various factors affected their selection of a doctoral program. Financial considerations were mentioned by four of the participants as one of the factors that influenced doctoral program

selection. Specifically, one person indicated that she was disinclined to add to her student loan debt and instead chose a doctoral institution with lower costs. Overall, in regard to finances, Ramirez (2013) concluded that both "perceived and actual financial constraints" can represent limitations to Latinos'/as' choices in graduate schools, especially in relationship to costlier and more selective institutions (p. 25).

Through semi-structured interviews, Peters and Daly (2013) examined individuals who entered graduate school after working for a minimum of five years outside of higher education. Most of the 10 participants were in engineering, while others were in related fields. Using expectancy value theory as a grounding framework, they found that participants expressed strong beliefs in their abilities to succeed academically. One type of cost in pursuing a graduate degree was financial in nature, which included income lost from workplace employment, lost benefits such as health insurance, and the challenge in securing sufficient funding to support their educational pursuits. Furthermore, a major motivation for pursuing a graduate degree was the perceived value of the additional education. As the authors noted, "The primary value they saw in a graduate degree was utility. Participants had a direct application for the degree, both for the credential itself and for the knowledge gained in their studies" (Peters & Daly, 2013, p. 262-263).

Not all individuals find the financial cost of the graduate program to be a barrier. A similar study was conducted by Thomas (2010), who interviewed 17 women over the age of 40 enrolled in graduate school or seminary. She found that, although the decision to return to school was often difficult, tuition was not perceived as an obstacle to the process. Many of the research participants continued their part- or full-time work in order to cover tuition expenses, while others utilized financial savings or had partners to support them in their education. The ability for

students to work to cover tuition and living expenses is important to consider. One's relative financial status prior to pursuing graduate education may change the perception regarding the degree to which tuition is seen as an obstacle.

Because the decision to pursue graduate education can be perceived as a tactical career behavior (King, 2004), it can be viewed from a career self-management perspective (Seibert, Kraimer, Holtom, & Pierotti, 2013), though this educational decision has not received extensive attention from a theoretical viewpoint. Seibert et al. (2013) found that individuals with graduate school plans were more likely to have utilized career planning. Those individuals also possessed less career satisfaction or had significantly positive "career shocks" (i.e., salary increases or promotions) (Seibert et al., 2013, p. 169). Applications to graduate school were related to intentions for a graduate education, career planning, and the effect of an individual's mentor departing from an organization. The researchers recommended that university professionals focus on lifelong learning and career development with graduates and newer employees, as this can promote a heightened interest in graduate education.

Graves and Wright (2007) examined motivational factors for pursuing a school psychology graduate degree, a discipline related to counseling. Two of the top five factors reflected economic variables among participants in non-doctoral programs. "Job stability influence" was found to be the third primary reason to enter the profession, while "income potential" ranked fifth among same group of participants. They concluded, "Consequently, recognizing specific reasons why individuals enter doctoral and nondoctoral programs can lead to changes in recruitment practices that may attract and retain a greater number of professionals" (Graves & Wright, 2007, p. 871).

Boes, Ullery, Millner, and Cobia (1999) found a dearth of articles on the topic of decision-making in doctoral programs in counselor education. In discussing milestones from selection and completion, they encouraged possible doctoral-level applicants to first ask themselves two questions related to timing in life and whether other parts of life are more important than a doctoral program. Interestingly enough, the notion of one's financial picture was not included in this section. The topic was raised indirectly in another section corresponding to full- or part-time study. Those students taking the latter route in doctoral studies were recommended to develop a structure of support that included employers who could aid them with academic deadlines and "who can meet some of the student's financial obligations" while fulfilling requirements in residency (Boes et al., 1999, p. 132).

In addition to financial stress, graduate students face unique challenges related to their academic performance (Prosek, Holms, & Daly, 2013). According to Hyun, Quinn, Madon, and Lustig (2006), approximately 45% of graduate students reported a stress-related problem that affected emotional well-being and academic performance. Moreover, they found that individuals' confidence in their finances was negatively correlated with reported mental health distress such as depression, stress, and anxiety. Other researchers have made the case that anxiety may lead to academic distress and difficulties (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010).

The economic factor as it relates to graduate school application and enrollment in Counseling programs may be a timely one. According to the 2009 Standards of the Council for Accreditation and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), "As of July 1, 2013, all applicant programs in Clinical Mental Health Counseling must require a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 quarter credit hours for all students" (CACREP, 2009, p. 4). McCarthy (2012) discussed the possible effects that an increase from 48 semester credit hours to 60 semester credit

hours for CACREP-accredited Counseling programs may have in regard to possible applicants. Because the accreditation requirements would entail longer Master's-level programs for students, translating into a greater tuition outlay, McCarthy posed the possibility that some individuals interested in a counseling career may look elsewhere. In preparing for the present study, the authors were not able to locate anything in the literature on the economic variables related to enrollment decisions in a graduate counseling program.

The purpose of this pilot study is to better understand economic variables and their impact on counseling students' decision to enroll in a graduate counseling program. In examining this topic, it is hoped that a greater understanding of economic issues and career perspectives among counseling students will emerge in such a way that could possibly enhance academic and career advising, as well as recruiting and advocacy efforts. Research questions guiding our survey included: How do economic variables (i.e., tuition, travel costs, books) enter decisions regarding possible enrollment in a graduate counseling program? What is the current and anticipated amount of student loan debt of graduate counseling students? Are reported levels of anxiety related to student loan debt?

Methods

Participants

Participants were Master's-level students (n = 101, age range: 19-60 years) who were recruited from classes in a CACREP-accredited Counseling program at a university in the Northeastern region of the United States. Age of participants was collected using categories of age ranges (i.e., 19-24), 58% (n = 57) of participants were aged 30 or younger. Participants attended classes in one of two locations: a suburban professional center (n = 59) or the University's main campus situated in a small, rural town (n = 42). Of the sample, 13 identified

as male and 77 as female. No participants identified as transgendered; 11 students did not answer this question. Both full-time (n = 53) and part-time (n = 45) students participated in the study; three participants did not provide this information. The amount of time in the counseling program varied for the participants with most students (n = 33) having completed more than 46 hours or having completed less than 9 hours (n = 31).

Measure

A 30-item survey was created by the authors and was designed to measure economic variables that guided participants' decisions to enroll in a graduate counseling program and their current and anticipated level of anxiety related to existing and anticipated student loan debt. The authors identified economic variables as any factor that could impact the perceived value of the pursuit of a graduate education. Content validity was derived by each author by independently identifying topics that would best capture a broad understanding of the role of economic factors in the participants' decision-making as indicated by their expertise as counselor educators and by what has been found in the literature (James, Ferguson, Powis, Symonds, & Yates, 2008; Punj & Staelin, 1978; Scanlon, 2008, Stewart, Hill, Stewart, Bimler, & Kirkland, 2005). The final topics guiding the survey were identified through interrater agreement. The authors identified direct financial costs of the program (i.e., tuition costs, student loan debt), indirect financial costs (i.e., cost of travel expenses), and perception of value (i.e., accreditation, length of program, online offerings) to operationalize the construct of economic conditions. Internal consistency measuring theses items using Cronbach's alpha was acceptable (α = .62).

The survey consisted of three sections. The first section contained five multiple-choice demographic items: gender, age, relationship status, enrollment status (full-time/part-time), and number of completed credits. Section two contained 13 items exploring participants' current

economic condition (i.e. annual income and amount of student loan debt), anticipated economic condition (i.e. "At this point in time, what is your anticipated annual income in your first post-Master's degree professional position?), and variables related to their decision to apply to any graduate program in counseling. Participants were asked to rank the importance (1-not important, 10-very important) of eight different variables (i.e., tuition, program accreditation, cost of travel expenses) on their decision to enroll in any graduate counseling program. Additionally, participants were asked to rate how much anxiety student loan debt currently is causing, and how much anxiety they anticipate student loan debt to cause on a scale from 1 to 10 (1-no anxiety, 10-high anxiety). The researchers only qualitatively described the anchor points for the aforementioned scales, thus allowing for continuous, interval responses from the participants. Finally, section three contained three Likert-type items assessing participants' thoughts regarding the requirement of 60 credit hours vs. 48 credit hours (i.e. "If I had known that many graduate programs in Counseling were moving from 48 to 60 credit hours, I would not have pursued this profession").

Procedure

After the proposal was approved by the university's institutional review board (IRB), the authors contacted instructors in the counseling program to seek data collection in their respective classes. Moreover, the authors followed the ACA (2014) *Code of Ethics* regarding research practices. After permission was granted, either one of the authors or a graduate assistant visited classes to seek involvement in the study. A graduate assistant recruited participants in the courses in which the authors' taught and students were notified that their decision to participate did not have any impact on the their academic standing. Potential participants were orally informed of the topic of the study and the approximate time involvement. Additional informed

consent material was given in writing. Data were collected over an approximate two-week period at both sites. A paper and pencil survey was distributed to each student in the course. Students completed the surveys in approximately 5-10 minutes. The data was then collected and entered into SPSS for data analysis.

Results

Analysis of the data focused on understanding the current economic conditions of the participants, the variables associated with enrolling in graduate school, and anxiety associated with student loan debt. Descriptive information is provided given the nature of this pilot study.

Economic Conditions

Participants were asked to identify their estimated range of personal income for 2012. Participants were given discrete, categorical choices ranging from no income to 70,001+ in \$5,000 increments. All but one of the participants who responded to this item (n = 99) had some income. Most participants (n = 61) stated their income ranged from \$5,001-\$40,000. Because students are in various life stages, the researchers wanted to determine if differences existed between older students and younger students. Participants were divided into two approximately equivalent age groups, 19-30 years of age (n = 56) and 30 years of age and older (n = 41) as this approximated an equal division of the participants. A Mann-Whitney test was conducted which indicated that students over 30 years of age reported significantly higher incomes than those between 19-30 years of age (U = 427.500; p < .001).

In this study, 83 participants (82.2%) stated that they have at least one paid position. One participant held four paid positions; two participants held three paid positions; and 17 participants reported being employed in two paid positions. The most frequent number of hours worked in a week (n = 25) was 36-40 hours with the next most frequent (n = 13) amount of hours

worked being 26-30 hours in a week. All in all, nearly 42% of participants reported working a range of 26-40 hours per week. Approximately 14% of the participants (n = 14) reported working over 40 hours per week.

Importance of Enrollment Variables

Enrollment variables were assessed using a scaling question that asked participants to rate the importance (1-not important to 10 -very important) of variables on their decision to apply to any graduate counseling program: Items included tuition; amount of undergraduate student loan debt travel expenses (to/from the site of classes); cost of books; number of online courses; perceived salary of counselors; travel distance; and programmatic accreditation. Not all participants provided a response to every variable. Missing data was omitted from the analysis of each variable. Central tendency and variability were analyzed for these variables (Table 1) with tuition, travel distance, and programmatic accreditation ranked as the most important variables in participants' decision to enroll in a graduate counseling program.

Table 1
Frequency of Enrollment Variables

Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	N
Tuition	7.55	8	10	2.97	97
Amount of Undergraduate	4.48	4	1	3.14	93
Student Loan Debt					
Travel Expenses	5.03	5	6	2.78	94
Cost of Books	4.31	4	1	2.64	94
Number of Online Courses	4.06	4	1	2.85	94
in the Program					
Perceived Salary of	6.01	6	7	2.90	95
Professional Counselor					
Travel Distance	7.03	8	10	2.79	97
Programmatic Accreditation	8.25	10	10	2.73	95

Anxiety Regarding Student Loan Debt

All participants (n = 101) answered the item, formatted by various monetary ranges, regarding their amount of undergraduate student debt. Participants were able to choose one of eight categories to indicate their current level of student loan debt from "No student loan debt" to "More than \$35,000." The categories increased in increments of \$5,000. The modal response indicated that 32 participants (31.7%) had no such debt. The next most frequent response was "over \$35,00" with 22 participants (21.8%) selecting this category. Twenty-eight participants (27.8%) identified student loan debt in the range of \$10,000-\$25,000.

The vast majority of participants (n = 95) ranked their level of anxiety regarding student loan debt (1-No Anxiety to 10-Very High Anxiety). Approximately 43% of participants ranked their anxiety at an 8 or higher on this item (n = 41), while approximately 21% of the participants ranked their anxiety regarding student loan debt at 3 or lower (n = 20). Cross tabulation analysis reveal that participants reporting no student loan debt still report anxiety over student loan debt. To better understand the relationship between reported anxiety and amount of student loan debt, the authors compared the amount of reported student loan debt with the reported levels of anxiety about student loan debt.

The student loan debt categories were recoded to create four groups with approximately equal number of participants. Participant responses were recoded into either: No student loan debt (n = 32), \$1-\$20,000 in debt (n = 26); \$21,000-\$35,000 in debt (n = 21); and more than \$35,000 in debt (n = 22). Descriptive data regarding reported anxiety were analyzed for each group (see Table 2); it should be noted that not every individual answered the item regarding student loan debt anxiety. The mean anxiety rating correlates positively with participants' reported student loan debt $(\rho = .324, p = .001)$. A Kruskal-Wallis H test reveals significant

differences in levels of anxiety across the different reported levels of student loan debt ($X^2(3)$ = 12.079, p = .007). A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to explore differences between each group revealing significantly higher reported levels of anxiety for those with over \$35,000 in student loan debt than with those with no debt (U = 174.500, p = .005) and those with \$1-\$20,000 in debt (U = 133.500, p = .002). No significant differences were found between other categories.

Table 2
Student Loan Debt Anxiety by Amount of Student Loan Debt

Debt	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	N
No Student Loan Debt	5.28	5	1	3.50	29
\$1-\$20,000	5.52	6	6	2.55	25
\$21,000-\$35,000	6.79	7	9	2.23	19
\$35,00+	7.95	8	10	2.01	22

Note: Not every individual answered both items regarding amount of student loan debt and student loan debt anxiety.

Required Credit Hours

The participants in the study were asked for their opinion related to the change in many counseling programs from 48-credit to 60-credit Master's degree programs. They did so by responding to the statement, "If I had known many graduate programs in Counseling were moving from 48 to 60 credits in length, I would not have pursued this profession" via a Likert item response (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree). Of the 98 participants who responded to this statement, 69 participants (70.4%) selected "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." Asked about the maximum amount of credits they would be willing to take for their Master's degree, participants (n = 76) answered in a range from 0 to 120 (M = 67.58, SD = 18.07). The modal number of hours was 60 credit hours (n = 24).

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that potential graduate students consider a variety of economic factors to be important in their decision to enroll in a graduate counseling program. Tuition costs, location of the counseling program, and programmatic accreditation were ranked as the three most important factors in the participants' decision to enroll in their current program. These factors seem to suggest that counselors place the greatest importance on factors that are going to have the most immediate and costly impact on their economic situation. Closely behind these factors in ranked importance was the perceived salary of professional counselors. This item ranked behind the first three factors, indicating that the potential longer-term economic impact is not as important of a factor or that other non-economic factors play an important role in the decision to pursue counseling as a career.

The importance of more immediate factors may be better understood when reviewing current student loan debt and students' rated anxiety. Approximately 70% of participants

145

acknowledged some undergraduate student loan debt, with 22% of the students indicating undergraduate student loan debt in excess of \$35,000. Moreover, 43% of participants acknowledged high levels of anxiety about student loan debt. Financial stress was a concern even for those students who indicated they did not have any undergraduate student loan debt. These students may have begun to acquire student loan debt at the graduate level, or may have other financial debts not assessed in this study that may be adding to their reported levels of anxiety.

The findings in this study indicate that a considerable portion of students are enrolling in graduate counseling programs with a significant financial burden from the outset. Prior researcher findings have indicated that confidence in one's finances is negatively correlated with reported stress (Hyun et al., 2006). The less confident that students feel in their financial situation may be related to higher levels of stress. This finding appears to be supported in the results of the current study, whereby higher levels of student loan debt were associated with higher reported levels of anxiety. Such anxiety could hinder long-term academic performance and emotional well being (Hunt et al., 2010; Prosek, Holms, & Daly, 2013) of graduate counseling students. More studies are needed to explore the long-term impact that levels of anxiety have on academic performance throughout graduate counseling programs.

Despite the reported levels of anxiety regarding student loan debt, the majority of the participants (70.4%) indicated they would still pursue a graduate degree in counseling knowing that a program was moving from 48 to 60 credit hours. However, the results of the current study show that tuition and accreditation are important factors for the majority of participants. These findings seem to indicate that, for many students, the decision to enroll in a graduate counseling program is mediated by various intrinsic factors. Students pursue degrees in counseling because

it is necessary for a career as a professional counselor. Students want a valuable, quality education that will translate into real world potential.

Recommendations

Four primary recommendations arising from the current findings are presented for consideration for counselor educators. In doing so, we recognize that students' specific financial situations are of course personal in nature and not known by counselor educators unless disclosed by them. First, in a broad manner, faculty members may be well served to better understand the general financial concerns of graduate students today. Early education regarding good self-care practices can help students learn to manage anxiety throughout their graduate program. Students are frequently in the process of making important decisions regarding their financial aid, how many classes to take in a given semester, and how to best use their economic resources to minimize their financial burden upon graduation. Though we are not advocating for counselor educators to act as financial advisors, a general understanding of the impact of debt on anxiety in contemporary society can help in academic advising situations. In their roles as academic advisors, counselor educators can be empathic, mindful, and open to the financial wellness of students and the possible associated anxiety. If specific financial concerns are communicated, it is recommended that students be referred to university financial services for assistance. Students bringing considerable student loan debt into a Master's degree program may, for instance, want to accelerate the process to graduate sooner as a way to enter or reenter the workplace more quickly.

Second, to further support students, counselor educators may be advised to become more aware of scholarship opportunities in the community, the university, and professional organizations and associations. Posting notifications of such financial opportunities may be done

in classrooms and departmental hallways, as well as on websites and electronic boards. Collaboration with university entities such as financial aid offices and career development centers may result in identifying additional scholarship opportunities.

Third, from a recruitment perspective, participants in this study related the importance of programmatic accreditation and tuition in their graduate school decision. Accreditation appeared to be a critical factor in their decision-making and is also a standard that merits initial and continual institutional and departmental investment of resources. Though tuition costs are not generally set by a department of counseling, counselor educators may be able to raise creative ideas with administrators in regard to such costs. For instance, one institution offered tuition discounts for alumni who experienced a layoff (Masterson, 2008).

Finally, the data in this study suggest that students entering a counseling program with high levels of undergraduate student loan debt may experience greater symptoms of anxiety from the outset. The CACREP Standards (CACREP, 2009) dictate that counseling programs should consider applicants' potential for success in counseling-related skills *and* (emphasis added) aptitude for academic success. Additional studies on financial anxiety and academic performance at the graduate level would be helpful in understanding this possible relationship. Until then, given the emphasis on wellness and self-care in counseling, counselor educators can generally educate students on a myriad of factors, including concerns over debt, that may impact overall wellness during their graduate studies.

The current study is intended to be a pilot study to examine important economic variables associated with students' decision to enroll in a graduate counseling program and the possible impact of student loan debt on counseling students. Subsequent studies could include larger and more representative samples to further refine the economic picture of counseling students. One

particular area that merits further exploration is the potential relationship between academic performance and undergraduate student loan debt throughout a counseling program. Studies (Hyun et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2007) indicate that anxiety can potentially have an impact on academic performance, and counseling students, in particular, may be exhibiting higher levels of psychological distress than the general population (White & Franzoni, 1990). As such, it is important to understand the factors that could potentially influence students' distress and, in turn, potentially hinder their academic performance. Finally, the survey used in this study was developed by the researchers and did not undergo psychometric scrutiny. As such, refining this instrument or developing a more robust instrument would be beneficial in future studies.

References

- American Counseling Association. (2014). ACA Code of Ethics. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Boes, S. R., Ullery, E. K., Millner, V. S., & Cobia, D. C. (1999). Meeting the challenges of completing a counseling doctoral program. *Journal of Humanistic Education & Development*, 37(3), 130.
- Counsel for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs. (2009). 2009 CACREP Accreditation Manual (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Graduate Management Admission Council. (2012). 2012 Global Management Education Graduate Survey. Survey Report. Graduate Management Admission Council: Reston, VA.
- Graves, Jr., S.L., & Wright, L.B. (2007). Comparison of individual factors in school psychology graduate students: Why do students pursue a degree in school psychology? *Psychology in the Schools*, 44(8), 865-872. doi:10.1002.pits.20271
- Hunt, J., & Eisenberg, D. (2010). Mental health problems and help-seeking behavior among college students. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 46, 3-10.
- Hyun, J., Quinn, B. C., Madon, T., & Lustig, S. (2006). Graduate student mental health: Needs assessment and utilization of counseling services. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47, 247-266.
- James, D., Ferguson, E., Powis, D., Symonds, I., & Yates, J. (2008). Graduate entry to medicine: Widening academic and socio-demographic access. *Medical Education*, 42(3), 294-300.
- King, Z. (2004). Career self-management: Its nature, causes and consequences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 65, 112-133.
- Masterson, K. (2008, December 16). St. John's U. of New York offers tuition discount to laid-off alumni. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/St-Johns-U-of-New-York/42133/
- McCarthy, J. (2012, July). Are counseling degrees approaching an economic tipping point? *Counseling Today*, pp. 52-53.
- Peters, D. L., & Daly, S. R. (2013). Returning to graduate school: Expectations of success, values of the degree, and managing the costs. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 102(2), 244-268. doi:10.1002/jee.20012
- Prosek, E. A., Holm, J. M., & Daly, C. M. (2013). Benefits of required counseling for counseling students. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *52*, 242-254. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2013.00040.x
- Punj, G. N., & Staelin, R. (1978). The choice process for graduate business schools. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 15(4), 588-598.
- Ramirez, E. (2013). Examining Latinos/as' graduate school choice process: An intersectionality perspective. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *12*(1), 23-36.
- Scanlon, A. (2008). How do university clinical school of nursing graduates choose their graduate nurse year program? *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26(2), 34-38.
- Seibert, S. E., Kraimer, M. L., Holtom, B. C., & Pierotti, A. J. (2013). Even the best laid plans sometimes go askew: Career self-management processes, career shocks, and the decision to pursue graduate education. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 98(1), 169-182.

- Smith, H. L, Robinson, E. H., & Young, M. (2007). The relationships among wellness, psychological distress, and social desirability of entering master's-level counselor trainees. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 47, 96-109.
- Stewart, R., Hill, K., Stewart, J., Bimler, D., & Kirkland, J. (2005). Why I am a psychology major: An empirical analysis of student motivations. *Quality & Quantity*, 39, 687-709. doi:10.1007/s11135-005-4484-9
- Thomas, C.M. (2010). "No hesitation: I would do it again:" Women over 40 who enroll in graduate school. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 5, 55-67.
- White, P. E., & Franzoni, J. B. (1990). A multidimensional analysis of the mental health of graduate counselors in training. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 29, 258-267.

Author Note

Tyler Wilkinson, Department of Counseling and Human Sciences, Mercer University John McCarthy, Department of Counseling, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Tyler Wilkinson, Department of Counseling and Human Sciences, Penfield College, 3301 Mercer University Dr., Atlanta, GA 30341 E-mail: wilkinson_rt@mercer.edu

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7729/81.1121