

The Professional Counselor

from the National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. and Affiliates

Volume 4, Issue 5

Special Issue: School Counseling

The refereed,
online, open-source
journal promoting
scholarship and
academic inquiry
within the profession of
counseling



THE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

Volume 4, Issue 5

Special Issue: School Counseling

Traci P. Collins, Guest Editor

THE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

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The Professional Counselor (TPC) is the official, open-source, electronic journal of the National Board for Certified Counselors and Affiliates, Inc. (NBCC), dedicated to research and commentary on empirical, theoretical, and innovative topics in the field of professional counseling and related areas.

TPC publishes original, peer-reviewed manuscripts relating to the following: mental and behavioral health counseling; school counseling; career counseling; couples, marriage, and family counseling; counseling supervision; theory development; professional counseling issues; international counseling issues; program applications; and integrative reviews of counseling and related fields.

The intended audiences for *TPC* include National Certified Counselors, counselor educators, mental health practitioners, graduate students, researchers, supervisors, and the general public.

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National Board for Certified Counselors
3 Terrace Way
Greensboro, NC 27403-3660

Volume 4, Issue 5

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Addressing Mental Health Needs in Our Schools: Supporting the Role of School Counselors



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 413–416
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/tpc.4.5.413

Traci P. Collins

School counselors are a well-positioned resource to reach the significant number of children and adolescents with mental health problems. In this special school counseling issue of *The Professional Counselor*, some articles focus on systemic, top-down advocacy efforts as the point of intervention for addressing child and adolescent mental health. Other articles investigate improving child and adolescent mental health through a localized, ground-level approach by developing school counselors' competency areas and specific school counseling interventions. Article topics include school counselors' professional identity, training, self-efficacy, supervision, burnout, career competencies and cultural competencies, as well as how to measure the impact of school counselors' interventions. The author discusses the importance of school counselors' role within schools, and hindrances to school counselors' ability to perform their role as counselors.

Keywords: school counselors, professional identity, role, competencies

A significant number of children and adolescents experience mental health problems in the United States. Between 13% and 20% of children experience a mental disorder in a given year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). Because school counselors have access to these students with mental illness in our nation's school systems, they are a well-positioned resource. School counselors improve the mental health of children and adolescents, thereby improving the students' overall functioning, personal/social development, career development and educational success. Students need mental health services; however, confusion exists as to how to utilize their most easily operationalized resource—school counselors (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006).

Overview of the Special Issue

In order to improve child and adolescent mental health and the efficiency of mental health services, the function of school counselors within the school system must be examined. I am pleased to introduce this special issue of *The Professional Counselor* focusing on school counseling. The collection of articles combines systemic, theoretical explorations with assessments of school counselor preparation and competencies. Some articles focus on the point of intervention (i.e., place for needed improvement and change) as systemic, top-down advocacy efforts. Other articles cover school counselor training, self-efficacy, supervision, and burnout versus career sustainability. A few articles in this special issue investigate improving child and adolescent mental health through a localized, ground-level approach by developing school counselors' competency areas and specific school counseling interventions.

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School Counselor Professional Identity

Over the last 100 years, school counseling has evolved from *vocational guidance* to the current concept of comprehensive school counseling. The first article in this special issue provides a historical perspective, describing the progression of school counselor professional identity (Cinotti, 2014). Cinotti (2014) discusses the conflicting professional identities (educator and counselor) that school counselors have experienced for the last century and the effects of role ambiguity concerning the utilization of school counselors and the assignment of duties. School counselors receive conflicting obligations and messages from counselor educators, school administrators and other stakeholders. However, research has found that among usual school counselor duties, direct counseling services are the most unique role of school counselors (Astramovich, Hoskins, Gutierrez, & Bartlett, 2014). Counseling services are often underutilized.

Bardhoshi, Schweinle, and Duncan (2014) explore school counselor professional identity on a more practical level by examining the impact of school-specific factors on school counselor burnout. The authors describe a mixed-methods study that expands on previous research indicating that role conflict is related to burnout in school counselors (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006) and examine organizational factors such as student caseload. Bardhoshi et al. include a telling statement from a study participant who shared, “When we are allowed to focus on the social and emotional needs of the whole child, we are best positioned to clear away the barriers to academic achievement” (p. 434). These authors emphasize the importance of comprehensive training in school counselor programs and counselor educator advocacy efforts.

In a third article involving school counselor professional identity, Duncan, Brown-Rice, and Bardhoshi (2014) describe the ways that inadequate supervision for school counselors contributes further to disordered professional identity development and insufficient support for school counselors. Appropriate clinical supervision provides professional identity development, proficiency in ethics and improved clinical abilities. However, school counselors often receive only administrative supervision conducted by noncounselors, and rural school counselors face additional challenges in seeking clinical supervision (Duncan, Brown-Rice, & Bardhoshi, 2014).

School Counselor Training

In 2012, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) published the third edition of *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*, which contains the following four elements for comprehensive school counseling programs: foundation, delivery system, management and accountability. In this special issue, Martin and Carey (2014) describe their examination of the National Model and subsequent development of a logic model for use in evaluating the success of the National Model. They suggest that future research could examine the outputs and outcomes outlined in their logic model before and after implementation of the National Model. Assessing school counselor preparation and student change provides insight into the effectiveness of the current guidelines for school counselor training.

After completing their graduate program, school counselors must apply knowledge associated with professional identity, ethical practice and sound counseling interventions. Schiele, Weist, Youngstrom, Stephan, and Lever (2014) present their research on counselor self-efficacy and performance when working with students in schools, focusing on the impact of counselor self-efficacy on the quality of counseling services and knowledge of evidence-based practices. Relatedly, Schiele et al. found that counselor self-efficacy plays an important role in the effective assessment and treatment of students’ mental health needs.

Career Counseling Competencies. Morgan, Greenwaldt, and Gosselin (2014) studied school counselor perceptions of competency in career counseling, also comparing Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) counselor preparation versus non-CACREP preparation. Their

participants, practicing school counselors, consistently shared feelings of incompetence and inadequacy in their ability to provide sound career development programming to their students. The results of this study indicate that feelings of unpreparedness upon leaving graduate school, along with feelings of incompetency, significantly impact school counselors' ability to address the needs of their students.

Cultural Competencies. Several articles in this special school counseling issue examine school counseling interventions or approaches for working with diverse populations. A 2010 Department of Defense report revealed that approximately 1.85 million children have at least one parent serving in the U.S. military (see Ruff & Keim, 2014). In this issue, Cole (2014) provides a guide for working with children from military culture. Culturally competent school counselors must be knowledgeable about the unique complexities of this population, along with other culturally distinctive populations. Van Velsor and Thakore-Dunlap (2014) describe working with South Asian immigrant adolescents in a group counseling format. Additionally, Shi, Liu, and Leuwerke (2014) offer insights into Chinese culture in their study examining students' perceptions of school counselors in Beijing.

While the aforementioned articles discuss students from certain cultural groups, this special issue of *The Professional Counselor* also provides an article about a specific population of U.S. students—those in need of anger management. Although anger is a common emotion experienced by both females and males (Karreman & Bekker, 2012), Burt and Butler (2011) noted that most anger management groups are gender biased, focusing excessively on adolescent males. In this special issue, Burt (2014) describes his investigation of gender differences in anger expression and anger control in adolescent middle school students, providing a foundation for practical applications and future research.

Concluding Comments

School counselors are well positioned within the school system to provide short-term clinical-based interventions to improve child and adolescent mental health. Proper identification, evaluation, and treatment of child and adolescent mental illness contribute to students' well-being, productivity and success in various areas of their lives (National Institute of Mental Health, 1999), including academic success. With student academic achievement receiving national attention, school counselors have been challenged to provide interventions that contribute to increased student achievement (ASCA, 2005). Villares et al. (2014) continue this initiative by establishing the validity of an assessment tool that can be used to measure the impact of school counselor-led interventions on student achievement. Outcome research can be useful in responding to the systemic concerns regarding school counselor professional identity and role within the schools. When counselors stay true to their roots—as counselors first and educators second—they are in the most useful position to improve student achievement by first fighting the war on student mental health.

Ninety years ago, Myers (1924) warned about interferences that would prevent the “real work of a counselor” from occurring (p. 141). This 90-year-old forecast echoes today, as contemporary school counselors need support in receiving robust training and preparation in professional identity and competencies, resolving administrative and systemic issues, and obtaining efficient supervision to guide the course of the counseling profession in the school system.

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Competing Professional Identity Models in School Counseling: A Historical Perspective and Commentary



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 417–425
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/dc.4.5.417

Daniel Cinotti

Recent research has focused on the discrepancy between school counselors' preferred roles and their actual functions. Reasons for this discrepancy range from administrators' misperceptions of the role of the school counselor to the slow adoption of comprehensive school counseling approaches such as the American School Counselor Association's National Model. A look at counseling history reveals that competing professional identity models within the profession have inhibited the standardization of school counseling practice and supervision. School counselors are counseling professionals working within an educational setting, and therefore they receive messages about their role as both counselor and educator. The present article includes a discussion of the consequences of these competing and often conflicting messages, as well as a description of three strategies to combat the role stress associated with this ongoing debate.

Keywords: school counseling, counseling history, professional identity, supervision, educational setting

The profession of school counseling has existed for more than 100 years, and throughout that time, competing professional identity constructs have impacted the roles, responsibilities and supervision of school counselors. Since the inception of school counseling, when it was known as *vocational guidance*, confusion has existed on how best to use and manage the resource that is the school counselor (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Pope, 2009). Although the focus of the profession has changed from vocational guidance to the current concept of comprehensive school counseling, problems surrounding the use and supervision of school counselors persist. Today, although the profession has identified a National Model (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012) that provides an example of a comprehensive programmatic approach, many practicing school counselors and administrators continue to work with outdated service models and reactive approaches (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). A look at the historical roots of school counseling provides insight into the lasting problems for school counselor utilization and supervision.

Historical Context of School Counselor Practice

At the outset of the school counseling profession, the role of vocational guidance slowly became recognized as an integral ingredient in effective vocational placement and training. With the creation of the National Vocational Guidance Association in 1913, and the proliferation of vocational guidance programs in cities such as Boston and New York, the profession rapidly expanded (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). Concerns over the lack of standardized duties, centralized supervision and evaluation of services soon followed. As Myers (1924) pointed out in a historic article titled "A Critical Review of Present Developments in Vocational Guidance with Special Reference to Future Prospects," vocational guidance was quickly being recognized as "a *specialized*

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educational function requiring special natural qualifications and special training” (p. 139, emphasis in original). However, vocational guidance was mostly being performed by teachers in addition to their other duties, with very few schools hiring specialized personnel. Although Myers (1924) and others expressed concerns over the lack of training and supervision, educators and administrators were slow to recognize the consequences of asking teachers to perform such vital duties in addition to their teaching responsibilities without proper training and extra compensation. Additionally, districts in which specific individuals were hired as vocational guidance professionals soon overloaded these professionals with administrative and clerical duties, which inhibited their effectiveness. Myers (1924) highlighted the situation as follows:

Another tendency dangerous to the cause of vocational guidance is the tendency to load the vocational counselor with so many duties foreign to the office that little real counseling can be done. . . . If well chosen he [or she] has administrative ability. It is perfectly natural, therefore, for the principal to assign one administrative duty after another to the counselor until he [or she] becomes practically assistant principal, with little time for the real work of a counselor. In order to prevent this tendency from crippling seriously the vocational guidance program it is important that the counselor shall be well trained, that the principal shall understand more clearly what counseling involves, and that there shall be efficient supervision from a central office. (p. 141)

In 1913, Jesse B. Davis introduced a vocational guidance curriculum to be infused into English classes in middle and high schools, an idea which he presented at the first national conference on vocational guidance in Grand Rapids, Michigan (Pope, 2009). It was summarily rejected by his colleagues, who would not embrace the idea of a guidance curriculum within the classroom. Slowly, however, as the profession grew and Davis and others gained respect and notoriety throughout the country, his “Grand Rapids Plan” gained support. Though Davis did not expect it, his model sparked debate between those who envisioned the expansion of counselor responsibilities and those who wished to maintain counselors’ primary duty as vocational guidance professionals (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). Ultimately, the heart of this debate was the role of vocational guidance as a supplemental service to the learning in the classroom or a distinctive set of services with a different goal than simply educating students. Although no definitive answer was agreed upon at the time, the realization that academic factors influence career choice and vice versa has helped to move the profession from a systemic approach of strictly vocational guidance to a comprehensive approach in which career, academic and personal/social development are all addressed (ASCA, 2003). The disagreement over Davis’s Grand Rapids Plan launched a debate between competing professional identity models that continues in the profession to this day.

Competing Professional Identity Models: Educator or Counselor?

Even during the time of vocational guidance in which the counseling profession’s singular purpose was to prepare students for the world of work, disagreement over the best way to perform this duty existed. As the profession began to define itself during the 1930s and '40s, school administrators heavily determined the professional responsibilities of the school counselor (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). When the profession expanded to include *personal adjustment counseling* as a reaction to the growing popularity of psychology, administrators reacted by expanding vocational guidance to include a more educational focus. During the 1950s, school counselors were placed under the umbrella term *pupil personnel services* along with the school psychologist, social worker, nurse or health officer, and attendance officer. Although the primary role of the school counselor throughout the '60s and '70s was to provide counseling services, concerns over the perception of the profession existed. As a result of the lack of defined school counselor roles and responsibilities, the position was still seen as an ancillary support service to teachers and administrators. It was therefore extremely

easy for administrators to continue to add to the counselor's responsibilities as they saw fit (Lambie & Williamson, 2004), aligning school counselor duties with their own identity as educators.

The 1970s brought about the beginning of school counseling as a comprehensive, developmental program. Some within the profession attempted to create comprehensive approaches, which included goals and objectives, activities or interventions to address them, planning and implementation strategies, and evaluative measures. It was the first time that school counseling was defined in terms of developmentally appropriate, measurable student outcomes (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). However, environmental and economic factors slowed the adoption of this new concept. The 1970s were a decade of decreasing student enrollment and budgetary reductions, which led to cutbacks in counselor positions (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). As a result, counselors began to take on more administrative duties either out of necessity or a desire to become more visible and increase the perception of the school counselor position as necessary. During this time, many of the counseling duties of the position were lost among other responsibilities more aligned with those of an educator.

In 1983, the National Commission of Excellence in Education published "A Nation at Risk," a report examining the quality of education in the United States (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Among its initiatives, the report jump-started the testing and accountability movement in education. Standardized testing coordination duties were almost immediately assigned to the counselor. In fact, over the course of the past century in the profession of school counseling, the list of counselor duties and responsibilities has steadily grown to include administrative duties such as scheduling, record keeping and test coordination. With the ever-growing and expanding role of the counselor, and in an attempt to articulate the appropriate responsibilities of the counselor, the concept of comprehensive school counseling programming, which was established in the late 1970s, grew in popularity during the '80s and '90s (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Mitchell & Gysbers, 1978). As time passed, programs became increasingly articulated and workable, and an emphasis on accountability and evaluation of practice emerged (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

What separates comprehensive school counseling from traditional guidance models is a focus on the program and not the position (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). The pupil personnel services models of the '60s and '70s listed the types of services offered but lacked an articulated, systemic approach, and therefore allowed for the constant assignment of other duties to school counselors. The concept of comprehensive programming was created in response to this problem (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006).

As early as 1990, Gysbers offered five foundational premises on which comprehensive school counseling is based. First, school counseling is a program and includes characteristics of other programs in education, including standards, activities and interventions that help students reach these standards; professionally certificated personnel; management of materials and resources; and accountability measures. Second, school counseling programs are developmental and comprehensive. They are developmental in that the activities and interventions are designed to facilitate student growth in the three areas of student development: academic, personal/social and career development (ASCA, 2003). They are comprehensive in that they provide a wide range of services to meet the needs of all students, not just those with the most need. The third premise is that school counseling programs utilize a team approach. Although professional school counselors are the heart of a comprehensive program, Mitchell and Gysbers (1978) established that the entire school staff must be committed and involved in order for the program to successfully take root. The fourth premise is that school counseling programs are developed through a process of systematic planning, designing, implementing and evaluating (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). This process has been described in different ways but often using the same or similar terminology (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008). Lastly, the fifth premise offered by Gysbers and

Henderson (2006) is that comprehensive school counseling programs have established leadership. A growing message in the school counseling literature is the need for school counselors to provide leadership and advocacy for systemic change (Curry & DeVoss, 2009; McMahan, Mason, & Paisley, 2009; Sink, 2009). Without the knowledge and expertise of school counseling leaders, comprehensive programs will not take hold.

The ASCA National Model

Only within the past decade has the school counseling profession as a whole embraced the concept of comprehensive programs (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008), a movement which was spurred by ASCA's creation of a National Model (ASCA, 2003). In 2001, ASCA created the first iteration of its National Model; intended as a change agent, it is a framework for states, districts and counseling departments toward the creation of comprehensive developmental school counseling programs. The ASCA National Model contains four elements, or quadrants, for creating and maintaining effective comprehensive programs (ASCA, 2012). The quadrants are the tools school counselors utilize to address the academic, personal/social and career needs of their students. The first, Foundation, is the philosophy and mission upon which the program is built. The second, Delivery System, consists of the proactive and responsive services included in the program. These services can be focused individually, in small groups or school-wide, and are delivered from—or are at least influenced by—the program's Foundation and mission statement. The third quadrant, Management, is organization and utilization of resources. Because a comprehensive program uses data to drive its Delivery System, the fourth quadrant is Accountability, which incorporates results-based data and intervention outcomes to create short- and long-term goals for the program (ASCA, 2012; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008).

The National Model is the most widely accepted conceptualization of a comprehensive school counseling program (Burnham, Dahir, Stone, & Hooper, 2008). It resulted from a movement toward comprehensive programs born out of school counselors' need to clarify their roles and responsibilities. Beginning with the Education Trust's (2009) Transforming School Counseling Initiative and continuing with the creation of National Standards for Student Academic, Career and Personal/Social Development, the National Model has been built upon the concepts of social advocacy, leadership, collaboration and systemic change, which are slowly but profoundly shaping the profession (Burnham et al., 2008; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008). Since the release of the National Model, however, the movement toward comprehensive school counseling programs has remained slow (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008). Such slow growth inhibits school counselors from standardizing or *professionalizing* their roles and responsibilities (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008).

Consequences of Competing Professional Identity Models

Lambie and Williamson (2004) stated that “based on this historical narrative, school counseling roles have been vast and ever-changing, making it understandable that many school counselors struggle with role ambiguity and incongruence while feeling overwhelmed” (p. 127). While the addition of many responsibilities has been a result of the natural expansion of the profession from vocational guidance to guidance and counseling to comprehensive school counseling, the influence of administrators has directly led to the assignment of inappropriate duties. From the outset of the profession, an essential question has involved these two competing identity models: Should school counselors be acting as educators or counselors?

The historically relevant and often opposing sets of expectations for school counselors come from both counselor educators during training and school administrators (such as principals) upon entering the profession. There is evidence to suggest that school counselors are not practicing as the profession indicates, both in terms of the ASCA National Model and the Education Trust's Transforming School Counseling Initiative (Clemens,

Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Therefore, a common source of role conflict and role ambiguity is the school administrators' perceptions of the school counselor function, a concern that Myers (1924) established and Lambie and Williamson (2004) reiterated. The concern that school counselors are being used as quasi-administrators instead of counseling professionals continues to persist.

According to ASCA (2012), school counselors are responsible for activities that foster the academic, career and personal/social development of students. The primary role of the school counselor, therefore, is direct service and contact with students. Among the activities ASCA (2012) listed as appropriate for school counselors are individual student academic planning, direct counseling for students with personal/social issues impacting success, interpreting data and student records, collaborating with teachers and administrators, and advocating for students when necessary. Among the activities listed as inappropriate are the following: registration and scheduling; coordinating and administering standardized tests; performing disciplinary actions; covering classes, hallways, and cafeterias; clerical record keeping; and data entry. In terms of role conflict, when faced with a task, school counselors often wish to respond in a manner that is congruent with their counselor identity, but are told to apply another professional identity—namely that of educator. For example, when a school counselor is asked to provide services to a student who has bullied, while also informing the student that he or she has been suspended from school for that behavior, the counselor may experience role conflict. Role ambiguity occurs when some of the duties listed as inappropriate are included as part of the counselor's responsibilities. For example, if a school counselor is asked to coordinate and proctor state standardized aptitude tests, the counselor experiences role ambiguity, as this duty is noncounseling-related, yet requires a significant time commitment (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005; Olk & Friedlander, 1992). These examples are but two of many possible scenarios in which the conflicting messages from competing professional identity orientations contribute to role stress for practicing school counselors.

Strategies for Addressing Competing Models

Within the recent literature on school counseling, many articles highlight the differences between school counselors' preferred practice models and actual functioning (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Culbreth et al., 2005; Lieberman, 2004; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008), as well as between administrators' view of the role of the school counselor and models of best practice within the profession (Clemens et al., 2009; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Zalaquett & Chatters, 2012). However, these discrepancies were identified virtually from the outset of the profession (Ginn, 1924; Myers, 1924) and can be attributed in large part to the different orientations encountered by counseling professionals working in educational settings. Despite the concept of comprehensive school counseling and the creation of a National Model delineating appropriate roles and responsibilities, the reality is that school counselors utilize different service models depending on the region, state, district and even school in which they work. From a historical perspective, it is clear that administrators often impose their identity as educators on school counselors through the assignment of noncounseling duties. However, it is also clear that school counselors themselves have been unsuccessful in advocating for the use of current best practices. Ironically, strategies to prevent counselors from becoming quasi-administrators were identified as early as 1924.

Myers (1924) not only identified the risk for counselors to be overloaded with administrative duties, but also listed three strategies that could be used to combat this possibility. First, he suggested that "counselor[s] shall be well trained" (p. 141). This suggestion is especially important for counselor educators, who are responsible for training future counselors and acting as gatekeepers to the profession. In addition to relevant theories, techniques and practices in individual and group counseling and assessment, it is clear that school counselors-

in-training also need enhanced knowledge and skill in advocacy. In order to achieve these goals, critical thought is necessary regarding school counselors' handling of the role stress created by competing professional identity models. Emphasizing the importance of maintaining a strong relationship with administrators also is critical, as history has suggested. Furthermore, comfort and enthusiasm in gathering and using data to provide evidence of effectiveness are essential skills. In short, in addition to preparing knowledgeable and skilled counselors, counselor educators are charged with preparing leaders and advocates; they should approach their work with school counselors-in-training with this intention.

Myers' (1924) next suggestion was that "principal[s] shall understand more clearly what counseling involves" (p. 141). As the literature suggests, school counselors and administrators share responsibility because of the inherent difference in their orientations. For administrators and others who supervise school counselors, it is important to understand that the training and professional identity of a school counselor is different from that of an educator, and that counselors are trained to address not only academic issues, but career and personal/social issues as well. Without this understanding, it is easy to impose inappropriate models of supervision and noncounseling-related activities on the counselor. It is necessary for practicing counselors to develop a strong sense of professional identity beginning in their training program. For some counselors, it is difficult to differentiate appropriate from inappropriate roles and responsibilities. This process is complicated for the many counselors who are former teachers and have been trained as both educators and counselors. However, it is essential to be able to articulate to administrators and other stakeholders the role of the counselor in maximizing student success. Practicing school counselors should portray themselves as counseling experts with the ability to create and maintain a developmentally appropriate and comprehensive program of services as defined by Gysbers and Henderson (2006). Knowledge of the ASCA National Model and other relevant state models aids in the practicing counselors' ability to position themselves as counseling professionals and to articulate their appropriate roles as such.

Myers' (1924) final suggestion was that "there shall be efficient supervision from a central office" (p. 141). Supervision can be provided by building administrators, district directors of school counseling or even experienced colleagues. Practicing school counselors can receive three distinct types of supervision: administrative, program and clinical. Administrative supervision is likely to occur, as it is provided by an assigned individual—usually a principal, vice principal or other administrator (Lambie & Sias, 2009). Program supervision, because it is related to comprehensive school counseling, is often present only if the district, school or counseling department adopts a comprehensive, programmatic approach (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008). Clinical supervision is perhaps the rarest of the three (Somody, Henderson, Cook, & Zambrano, 2008), and the most necessary, because it impacts counseling knowledge and skills, and decreases the risk of unethical practice (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Lambie & Sias, 2009).

As Dollarhide and Saginak (2008) described, school counselors are likely encountering evaluation of practice, but rarely participating in what could be considered clinical supervision. Evidence as to why school counselors do not receive as much clinical supervision as they do administrative supervision mostly surrounds the perceptions of principals, vice principals and district-level administrators that school counselors' roles are primarily focused on academic advising, scheduling and other noncounseling activities (Herlihy, Gray, & McCollum, 2002; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005). However, research indicates that a significant number of practicing counselors feel as though they have no need for clinical supervision. In a national survey, Page, Pietrzak, and Sutton (2001) found that 57% of school counselors wanted to receive supervision in the future and 10% wanted to continue receiving clinical supervision; however, 33% of school counselors believed that they had "no need for supervision" (p. 146).

One reason that school counselors may not desire or see a need for supervision is the memory of previously dissatisfying experiences. Most school counselors receive a majority of their supervision from noncounseling staff such as principals (Lambie & Sias, 2009), and yet the majority of school counselors consistently point to a desire for more clinical supervision to enhance their skills and assist them with taking appropriate action with students (Page et al., 2001; Roberts & Borders, 1994; Sutton & Page, 1994). Additionally, the majority of school counselors in Page et al.'s (2001) study preferred counselor-trained supervisors, a fact that corroborated the findings of earlier studies (Roberts & Borders, 1994). When one couples this information with the idea that many principals are attempting to use existing models of teacher supervision to supervise school counselors (Lambie & Williamson, 2004), it is clear that many school counselors may be receiving inappropriate and generally dissatisfying supervision from administrators.

Conclusion

Practicing school counselors are faced with the challenge of identifying and maintaining a professional identity while receiving conflicting messages from counselor educators, administrators and other stakeholders. Counselor educators are not only responsible for addressing future counselors' knowledge, skills and personal awareness; they are also responsible for developing counselor trainees' professional identities. School counselors-in-training should be aware of the possible ambiguous messages and responsibilities that await them upon entering the profession. An important skill often forgotten is advocacy; counselor educators can assist future professionals in developing skills that will assist them in educating their colleagues and administrative supervisors. One example of an important change for which current and future professionals should advocate is more clinical supervision addressing counseling skills and ethical practice. A counselor-trained supervisor, such as a director of school counseling services or an experienced colleague, can provide more appropriate and satisfying supervision because of his or her knowledge of the unique demands of the work counselors do.

A look back at the history of the counseling profession reveals that the struggle over a clear professional identity has inhibited the profession almost since its inception. Perhaps a solution to this problem can be gleaned from the words of those researchers present at the beginning of the debate. Myers (1924) provided three suggestions for combating the role stress brought on by competing professional identities within the profession. Counseling professionals should begin there when considering the essential question at the heart of this debate: Are school counselors acting as counselors or educators?

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The author reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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Understanding the Impact of School Factors on School Counselor Burnout: A Mixed-Methods Study



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 426–443
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/gb.4.5.426

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This mixed-methods study investigated the relationship between burnout and performing noncounseling duties among a national sample of professional school counselors, while identifying school factors that could attenuate this relationship. Results of regression analyses indicate that performing noncounseling duties significantly predicted burnout (e.g., exhaustion, negative work environment and deterioration in personal life), and that school factors such as caseload, Adequate Yearly Progress status and level of principal support significantly added to the prediction of burnout over and above noncounseling duties. Moderation tests revealed that Adequate Yearly Progress and caseload moderated the effect of noncounseling duties as related to several burnout dimensions. Participants related their burnout experience to emotional exhaustion, reduced effectiveness, performing noncounseling duties, job dissatisfaction and other school factors. Participants conceptualized noncounseling duties in terms of adverse effects and as a reality of the job, while also reframing them within the context of being a school counselor.

Keywords: burnout, noncounseling duties, professional school counselors, mixed methods, job dissatisfaction

Although the term *burnout* was first coined by Freudenberger (1974) to describe a clinical syndrome encompassing symptoms of job-related stress, it is generally accepted that the work of Maslach and colleagues has served as the foundation of the empirical study of burnout as a psychological phenomenon. Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) defined burnout as a prolonged exposure to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job. The primary focus of burnout studies remains within the occupational sector of human services and education, where empathy demands are high and the emotional challenges of working intensively with other people in either a caregiving or teaching role are considerable (Maslach et al., 2001). Burnout is defined by three core dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Emotional exhaustion is a key aspect of the burnout syndrome. It is the most obvious manifestation of the syndrome (Maslach et al., 2001) and a reaction to increasing job demands that produce a sense of overload and exhaust one's capacity to maintain involvement with clients (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Feeling unable to respond to the needs of the client, one experiences purposeful emotional and cognitive distancing from one's work. This effort to establish distance between oneself and the client is defined as depersonalization. Reduced personal accomplishment describes the eroded sense of effectiveness that burned-out individuals experience (Maslach et al., 2001).

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According to the job demands–resources model, one of the most cited models in burnout literature, burnout occurs in two phases: first, extreme job demands lead to sustained effort and eventually exhaustion; second, a lack of resources to deal with those demands further leads to withdrawal and eventual disengagement from work (Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2001). Professional school counseling is a profession in which emotional empathy is a requirement, and the qualitative and quantitative job demands are high. Stressors linked to burnout (e.g., high workload, negative work environment) have effects that may persist even after exposure to the stressor has ended, leading to negative impact on daily well-being (Repetti, 1993). In those jobs in which high demands exist simultaneously with limited job resources, both exhaustion and disengagement are evident (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Demerouti et al., 2001). With organizational factors accounting for the greatest degree of variance in burnout studies (Lee & Ashforth, 1996), robustly exploring factors unique to the profession of school counseling is a key to understanding the phenomenon of burnout in school counselors.

Variables Related to Burnout in School Counselors

School counseling literature has repeatedly drawn attention to organizational variables that are problematic for the profession and might provide insight into the burnout phenomenon. School counselors face rising job demands (Cunningham & Sandhu, 2000; Gysbers, Lapan, & Blair, 1999; Herr, 2001) that are often difficult to balance (Bryant & Constantine, 2006), leading them to feel overwhelmed in their work environment (Kendrick, Chandler, & Hatcher, 1994; Kolodinsky, Draves, Schroder, Lindsey, and Zlatev, 2009; Lambie & Williamson, 2004), and to lack the time to provide direct services to students (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). In addition to job overload, school counselors also are expected to perform a high number of conflicting job responsibilities, leading to role conflict (Coll & Freeman, 1997).

Role conflict is indeed related to burnout in school counselors (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Paperwork and other noncounseling duties interfere with the roles of school counselors and are a source of job stress and dissatisfaction (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Kolodinsky et al., 2009). Authors have pointed out that school counselors who perform noncounseling duties labeled as *inappropriate* rate them as highly demanding (McCarthy et al., 2010), experience less satisfaction with and commitment to their jobs (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006), and cite these duties as a source of stress and role conflict (Kendrick et al., 1994).

Another factor implicated in school counselor overload is a large caseload (Sears & Navin, 1983). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a 250:1 ratio of students to counselors; however, the national average of students per counselor is closer to 471 (ASCA, 2014). High counselor-to-student ratios further decrease the already limited time school counselors have available for providing direct counseling services to students (Astramovich & Holden, 2002). Feldstein (2000) reported that larger caseloads correlate with higher burnout in school counselors, a finding also echoed in Gunduz's (2012) study of school counselors in Turkey.

School counseling today continues to be affected by initiatives and educational reforms (Herr, 2001), with school counselors facing the expectation of involvement in both educational and mental health initiatives (Paisley & McMahon, 2001). A current example includes the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandate, passed in 2002, which emphasizes required testing for all students, as well as increased accountability for school staff, including school counselors, to track student progress (Erford, 2011). Despite school counselors being an essential part of the school achievement team, they were not included in the NCLB reform movement (Thompson, 2012). The consequences of not meeting annual NCLB progress targets, termed Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), have been implicated in increased stress for school staff and have negatively impacted school

climates (Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Thompson & Crank, 2010), potentially important factors to explore in relation to school counselor burnout.

A few studies also have drawn attention to the organizational support received from colleagues and supervisors in the work environment and the potential moderating effects of this variable on burnout. Perceived organizational support refers to employees' perception of their value to the organization, as well as the support available to help them perform their work and deal effectively with stressful situations (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Bakker et al. (2005) found that, among other factors, a high-quality relationship with one's supervisor provided a buffering effect on the impact of work overload on emotional exhaustion. Similarly, school counselors who perceive their own value to the organization as high seem to experience lower levels of job-related stress and greater levels of job satisfaction (Rayle, 2006). Lambie (2002) identified organizational support as the greatest influence on school counselor burnout levels in all three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Yildirim (2008) reported significant negative relationships between principal support and burnout in school counselors, while Wilkerson and Bellini (2006) further asserted that working relationships with school principals make a difference in school counselor burnout.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between burnout among professional school counselors, as measured by the Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI; Lee et al., 2007), and the assignment of noncounseling duties, as measured by the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS; Scarborough, 2005), while also identifying other organizational factors in schools that could attenuate this relationship. We aimed to obtain different but complementary data on the same topics and included open-ended qualitative questions in the online survey in order to expand on quantitative results with qualitative data and gain a more nuanced understanding of burnout (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Connides (1983) concluded that this combined qualitative and quantitative analysis approach is efficient for gathering baseline data from large numbers of respondents, resulting in a broader understanding of participants and phenomena. Research questions included the following:

1. What is the relationship between noncounseling duties, as measured by all three subscales of the SCARS (Fair Share, Clerical and Administrative), and burnout, as measured by each of the five subscales of the CBI (Exhaustion, Incompetence, Negative Work Environment, Devaluing Client and Deterioration in Personal Life) among professional school counselors surveyed?
2. Do other school factors—specifically caseload, principal support and meeting AYP—also affect burnout, above and beyond noncounselor duties?
3. Can other school factors attenuate the effect of assignment of noncounselor duties on burnout?
4. What is the individual, unique and subjective meaning that participants ascribe to their experience of burnout and performing noncounseling duties in a school setting?

Method

Participants and Procedure

After obtaining institutional board approval, we created a randomized list of 1,000 school counselors who belonged to ASCA. The survey method followed a multiple-contact procedure suggested by Dillman (2007) regarding Internet surveys; a criterion sampling procedure embedded in the first page of the online survey ensured that all participants who progressed to the survey met the following criteria: (a) certified as a school counselor in their practicing state, and (b) working in elementary, middle and/or high school. Of the

286 counselors who responded to an e-mail survey invitation, 252 provided complete responses on the CBI, resulting in a 26% response rate (sample sizes for the specific tests may vary as a function of missing data for individual variables).

Some states offer a K–12 certification for school counselors. School counselors with this certification typically work in small schools and their assignment is the whole K–12 population; or, in the case in which counselors work in a school with multiple school counselors, their assignment might be a mix of grades from K–12. Participants in this study included school counselors with a wide range of grade-level assignment: 36.5% were K–12 school counselors, 32.9% were high school counselors, 19% were elementary school counselors and 11.5% were middle school counselors. The majority of the school counselors (41.7%) reported a rural work location, with the remaining 31% being suburban and 27.8% urban. Public school counselors made up the majority of the sample (75% public vs. 18.3% private). The sample also included charter schools (6%) and a tribal school (.4%). Although 36.5% of the participants reported caseloads of up to 250, the majority of the participants reported caseloads over the recommended ASCA numbers of 250 (32.9% had caseloads of 251–400; 30.6% had caseloads of 400+). The majority of school counselors (56%) indicated that their school had made AYP for the most recent school year, with 24.6% indicating that their school had not made AYP, and 19.4% identifying AYP as not applicable for their particular school. School counselors' responses also ranged in how supported they felt by their school principal—from very much so (42.9%), to quite a bit (23%), moderately (18.7%), a little bit (12.3%) and not at all (3.2%).

Women made up the majority of the sample (82.1% vs. 17.9% men). In terms of race and ethnicity, the majority identified as White (78.6%), with the next largest groups being Black and Hispanic (both 7.9%). The majority of school counselors (49.2%) selected the 0–5 range for their years of experience, with the following categories (6–10 and 11+) almost equally distributed (25% and 25.8%, respectively).

Instruments

Counselor Burnout Inventory. The CBI is a 20-item instrument designed to measure burnout in professional counselors (Lee et al., 2007). It is divided into five subscales: Exhaustion (e.g., “I feel exhausted due to my job as a counselor”), Incompetence (e.g., “I feel frustrated by my effectiveness as a counselor”), Negative Work Environment (e.g., “I feel negative energy from my supervisor”), Devaluing Client (e.g., “I am not interested in my clients and their problems”) and Deterioration in Personal Life (e.g., “I feel I have poor boundaries between work and my personal life”). Participants rate items on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = never true, to 5 = always true. Scores for each of the individual subscales may range from 4–20, with total scores ranging from 20–100.

Lee et al. (2007; 2010) examined the initial validity and reliability of the CBI with two samples of counselors from a variety of specialties, including professional school counselors. Construct validity for the CBI was assessed by utilizing an exploratory factor analysis, which resulted in a five-factor solution that accounted for 66.97% of the total variance, with all goodness of fit indices also supporting an adequate fit to the data. Reported internal consistency for all five subscales by Lee et al. (2007) included alpha coefficient scores of .94 for the overall scale and .80 for Exhaustion, .81 for Incompetence, .83 for Negative Work Environment, .83 for Devaluing Client and .84 for Deterioration in Personal Life subscales. Test-retest reliability of the CBI across all five subscales was .81, indicating good reliability of this instrument over time. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of scores for the CBI were .92, well within the reported range of .88–.94.

School Counselor Activity Rating Scale. The SCARS was designed to assess the frequency with which school counselors actually perform certain activities, as well as the frequency with which they would prefer to perform those activities (Scarborough, 2005; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Utilizing a verbal frequency scale

(ranging from 1 = rarely do this activity, to 5 = routinely do this activity), school counselors rate their actual and preferred performance of a wide range of intervention activities (e.g., counsel students regarding personal problems, coordinate and maintain a comprehensive school counseling program) as well as other noncounseling activities. Only the Other Duties scale of the SCARS was used for this study. Participants rated their actual performance of 10 activities that fall into three subscales: Clerical (e.g., “schedule students for classes”), with scores ranging from 3–15; Fair Share (e.g., “coordinate the standardized testing program”), with scores ranging from 5–15; and Administrative (e.g., “substitute teach and/or cover for teachers at your school”), with scores ranging from 2–10.

Scarborough (2005) examined the initial validity and reliability of the SCARS with a random sample of 300 school counselors, demonstrating content and construct validity for the SCARS subscales. A separate analysis on the 10 items reflecting Other School Counseling Activities supported three factors in which noncounseling activities can be categorized: Clerical, Fair Share and Administrative. Scarborough (2005) also demonstrated convergent and discriminant construct validity. Reported Cronbach’s alphas were .84 for the Clerical subscale, .53 for the Fair Share subscale, and .43 for the Administrative subscale. Despite some subscale low reliability scores, the researchers were unable to locate any other instrument measuring noncounseling duties with published psychometric data. In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha for the Other Duties Subscale scale was an adequate .69 and within the reported range of .43–.84.

Demographic Information. Demographic information collected included gender, ethnicity, highest degree earned, number of years as a practicing school counselor, grade-level assignment, location of school, type of school, total numbers of students in school, caseload number, total number of school counselors in school, percentage of minority students, percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, whether the school made AYP, and perceived level of support from school principals.

Qualitative Questions. Three open-ended questions were included in the online survey to allow participants latitude in their responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). These questions included the following: What does burnout mean to you as a school counselor?, What does performing noncounseling duties in a school setting mean to you? and What other information would you like to add that has not been addressed in this survey?

Data Entry and Analysis

Data were imported from SurveyMonkey to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18 and examined prior to analysis. A concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design was utilized with the qualitative and quantitative data analyzed separately but integrated in the interpretation of the findings; quantitative and qualitative findings were combined into a “coherent whole” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 214). It was hypothesized that among professional school counselors surveyed, a model containing all three of the SCARS subscales measuring noncounseling duties (Fair Share, Clerical and Administrative) would significantly predict three subscales of the CBI (Exhaustion, Negative Work Environment and Deterioration in Personal Life). In order to test this hypothesis, we conducted five separate linear, multiple-regression analyses of assignment of noncounselor duties (Clerical, Fair Share and Administrative, as measured by the SCARS) on each of the measures of burnout (Exhaustion, Incompetence, Negative Work Environment, Devaluing Clients and Deterioration in Personal Life, as measured by the CBI). We predicted that noncounselor duties would significantly predict exhaustion, negative work environment and deterioration in personal life. (Those participants who said AYP was not applicable to them were removed from this and future analyses.)

We also questioned whether school factors that could tap into job demands and resources (e.g., caseload, meeting AYP and lack of principal support) were predictive of burnout, over and above noncounselor duties. Caseload was coded as 0–250, 251–400, and over 400. Therefore, we dummy-coded this variable with the

ASCA-recommended load of 0–250 as the reference group. We conducted hierarchical regressions, assessing the increase in prediction of burnout by other factors from the models with only noncounselor duties. To test the possibility that other school factors (e.g., meeting AYP, caseload, principal support) may increase or lessen (i.e., moderate) the effects of noncounseling duties on burnout, we ran a series of moderation tests (see Baron & Kenny, 1986) to arrive at a model for each measure of burnout including only the meaningful moderators. To create moderation terms, we centered the measures of noncounselor duties and other school factors about their means, and then multiplied (other school factors \times noncounselor duties). For each measure of burnout, we used hierarchical regression to determine if the moderators significantly added to the prediction, over and above the main effects. We tested the addition of each moderator to the main effects model. Because this resulted in 60 tests, only the significant tests are reported in the results.

Analysis of the qualitative data was guided by a grounded theory approach, which allows the researcher to inductively move from a simple to a more nuanced understanding of a phenomenon through the identification and formulation of words, concepts and categories within the text (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Although not used to build a theory, this methodology allows for the utilization of frequency, meanings and relationships of words, concepts or categories to make meaningful inferences regarding the participants' words (Silverman, 1999).

The first author coded qualitative responses line-by-line using etic or substantive codes, which were informed by school counseling and burnout literature. The first author then used a second level of coding: emic codes that emerged from the data, which are open codes using the participant's own words to identify any emergent codes that departed from or supplemented burnout and school counseling literature. A constant comparative method, which compares coded segments of text with similar and different segments, was utilized to further refine the analysis. Axial codes were then used to conceptually categorize codes in order to capture larger emergent themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

When using qualitative methodology, researchers must be transparent as they become instruments of investigation. The first author is in her second year as a counselor educator, and was prompted to study the topic after working closely with school counselors who displayed many of the symptoms of burnout. The third author is in her 11th year as a counselor educator and has been involved in the field of school counseling for over 25 years. In addition to utilizing a subjectivity memo to guard against bias (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), we enhanced trustworthiness by having the third author audit the first author's entire process and documents. A review of verbatim responses to determine adequate categorization of codes and themes derived by the first author provided a reliability check, and led to appropriate adjustments made by consensus. Response frequencies are included to present particularly influential codes (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib, & Rupert, 2007).

Results

Assignment of Noncounselor Duties and Burnout

The results of the regression analysis (see Table 1) supported the hypothesis that among professional school counselors surveyed, a model containing all three of the SCARS subscales measuring noncounseling duties (Fair Share, Clerical and Administrative) would significantly predict three subscales of the CBI (Exhaustion, Negative Work Environment and Deterioration in Personal Life). That is, noncounselor duties significantly predicted exhaustion, negative work environment and deterioration in personal life. More specifically, assignment of clerical duties was an important predictor for all three burnout subscales, and administrative duties were important for predicting negative work environment.

Table 1*Results of Regression Analyses of Noncounselor Duties Predicting Each Burnout Subscale*

	Burnout measure (DV)					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	Exhaustion	Incompetence	Negative work environment	Devaluing client	Deterioration in personal life		
<i>R</i> ²	0.11***	0.02	0.06**	0.01	0.08***		
<i>MSE</i>	13.99	9.10	16.26	2.80	11.00		
β clerical	0.27***	0.08	0.13†	0.09	0.25***	9.90	4.22
β fair share	0.11	0.02	-0.02	-0.10	0.02	16.26	4.33
β administrative	0.07	0.11	0.20**	-0.01	0.11	4.54	1.90
<i>M</i>	11.96	9.02	10.16	5.22	8.50		
<i>SD</i>	3.95	3.03	4.13	1.68	3.44		

Note. *N* = 212.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001; †*p* < .06.

Qualitative responses from participants answering the question, What does performing noncounseling duties mean to you? also echoed these results. Many participants responded to this qualitative question by listing a variety of noncounseling duties they performed at their school, which were fair share, administrative or clerical in nature. The most frequently cited noncounseling duties were testing (46), lunch duty (38), substitute teaching (31), discipline (23), scheduling (19), special education services (15) and bus duty (15). Many school counselors also described noncounseling duties as those that do not fall in the direct services category (16), or are not recommended by ASCA (10).

A major theme that emerged from the qualitative responses was that school counselors viewed performing noncounseling duties as having adverse personal and professional effects, including feeling exhausted and burned out (21), detracting from their job (36), serving as a source of stress and frustration (13), being a waste of time and resources (8) and resulting in making them feel less valued (8). One school counselor described performing noncounseling duties as follows:

It means that these activities and responsibilities are taking away from my time with students. When I am pushing papers, coordinating everything under the sun and mandated to serve on multiple committees, I rarely have time to design the classroom guidance lessons I'd like to do and I rarely have time to adequately research/prepare for my individual counseling sessions. I often feel like I am "putting out little fires" with students, staff, and parents.

Another major theme that emerged from the responses was that performing noncounseling duties was accepted as a reality of the job. Although many school counselors viewed noncounseling duties as tasks that could or should be done by other school professionals (19), or as resulting from role ambiguity (13), many cited that they simply had to be done (28). One school counselor stated, "It inevitably leads to the question of who will do the duty if we were not to. Resources are limited in many school districts these days." Another

added, “Counselors have always taken on or have been given other school assignments, it usually depends on the site administrator who often shares their overwhelming work load.” Yet another school counselor said, “It is somewhat expected because administration is not aware of all that we do, and the immediate demands are constantly arising.”

A final major theme emerging from school counselor responses regarding noncounseling duties was that many school counselors positively reframed some noncounseling duties within the context of their job, with many of them viewing them as fair share duties (17), as part of being on the school team (16) and even opportunities that positively affect their job (23). As one school counselor stated, “Obviously it would be ideal to be doing counseling all the time but I also feel that as a member of the team, supporting other team members in doing things that are not necessarily counseling related is also part of the job.”

Another counselor added the following:

It is difficult to define noncounseling duties in a school setting because every opportunity to be with students is an opportunity to build relationships that can be beneficial to the counseling relationship. In the same way, working with adults in the school community on committees for example can be the vehicle for forming positive professional relationships. In my school, I also teach classes for teachers and parents which increases my “counselor visibility” and has greatly enhanced my school practice. Some counselors would find teaching and serving on committees to be “noncounseling” but I find them to be “door opening.”

It appears that many school counselors view duties that allow them to interact with children and other school professionals positively, even if those duties may fit the noncounseling category.

Other School Factors and Burnout

To determine whether school factors that could tap into job demands and resources (e.g., caseload, meeting AYP and lack of principal support) were predictive of burnout, in addition to noncounselor duties, we conducted hierarchical regressions. We assessed the increase in prediction of burnout by other factors from the models with only noncounselor duties. For all but one measure of burnout (devaluing clients), caseload, AYP and principal support significantly added to the prediction of burnout over and above that accounted for by assignment of noncounseling duties. This was especially true for negative work environment. In all cases, principal support negatively predicted burnout (see Table 2).

A major qualitative theme was that individuals related their experience of burnout to organizational factors specific to their school. School factors cited as defining burnout included lack of time (36), budgetary constraints (13), lack of resources (8), lack of organizational support (8), lack of authority (4) and a negative school environment (4). One participant’s words seemed to encapsulate this theme when describing the experience of burnout: “When you feel you have too many responsibilities and not enough time or resources. When you feel overwhelmed by the amount of work. Feeling of longing to do some other job due to stress, difficulty coping with demands, paperwork, lack of support, lack of input, or other long-term difficulties on the job.”

Table 2*Results of Hierarchical Regression of Noncounselor Duties and Other School Factors Predicting Burnout*

	Burnout Measure				
	Exhaustion	Incompetence	Negative work environment	Devaluing client	Deterioration in personal life
ΔR^2	0.09***	0.07**	0.43***	0.03	0.08***
Full model					
R^2	0.21***	0.09**	0.49***	0.04	0.17***
MSE	12.73	8.68	8.82	2.84	10.12
β clerical	0.27***	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.22*
β fair share	0.12	0.07	0.09	-0.06	0.06
β administrative	0.10	0.10	0.15*	-0.05	0.11
β caseload (ASCA vs 251+)	0.11	0.09	0.14*	-0.01	0.09
β caseload (ASCA vs. 400+)	0.17*	0.03	0.05	-0.06	0.00
β AYP	0.12	0.05	0.10	0.02	0.16*
β principal support	-0.17**	-0.23**	-0.62***	-0.17*	-0.20**

Note. Hierarchical regressions adding other school factors (caseload, AYP, and principal support) to the model with noncounselor duties. $N = 206$.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Qualitative findings, although not AYP-specific or constituting major themes, indicated that some counselors felt stress regarding the call for data and accountability measures present in today's school systems. One counselor described the situation as follows:

I think that the fact that ASCA has swallowed the NCLB "data-all-the-time" Kool Aid, adds to my stress tremendously. It encourages counselors to become quasi-administrators and data-collectors instead of doing the job that is encapsulated by our title: COUNSEL [*sic*] individuals and groups of kids in a school setting. When we are allowed to focus on the social and emotional needs of the whole child, we are best positioned to clear away the barriers to academic achievement. Our effect on test scores is indirect. Thus, it is a red herring to go chasing after "data" that proves we belong in a school.

Another participant stated, "The biggest drain and waste of time has to be, without a doubt, testing, testing, testing!"

Although principal support was not a major theme in the qualitative results, participants discussed principal support when referring to a lack of organizational support and a negative work environment in their schools. Another participant's words seemed to echo the importance of supervisor support when discussing his or her own experience of burnout: "Stress from too much work and less resources. Supervisors becoming less supportive and more disciplinary. School is not a fun place to learn. So much for positive behavior supports."

Effects of Other School Factors on Noncounseling Duties and Burnout

To determine whether other school factors, like meeting AYP, caseload and principal support may increase or lessen (i.e., moderate) the effects of noncounseling duties on burnout, we ran a series of moderation tests

(see Baron & Kenny, 1986) to arrive at a model for each measure of burnout including only the meaningful moderators. It appears that meeting AYP and caseload can moderate the effect of noncounselor duties as they relate to exhaustion. Caseload also can moderate the effects on noncounselor duties as they relate to incompetence, devaluing clients and deterioration in personal life. However, even though adding the moderation of the SCARS Fair Share Activities (SFSA) by caseload increased the prediction of devaluing clients, the whole model was still not significant ($R^2 = .04$). Therefore, we will not discuss this measure of burnout further; the remaining moderations, as indicated in Table 3, will be discussed in turn.

Table 3

Moderation Tests

ΔR^2	Burnout measure				
	Exhaustion	Incompetence	Negative work environment	Devaluing client	Deterioration in personal life
SFSA*AYP	.01**				
SAA*AYP	.01*				
SCA*caseload ¹	.03***			.02***	.02***
SFSA*caseload ¹	.01**	.02***		.01**	

Note. Values in the table represent the change in R^2 as a function of adding each moderator, in turn, to the main effects model (i.e., full model in Table 2). Only significant values are reported. ¹Caseload was dummy coded, so two moderation terms were actually created—one for each dummy code. The ΔR^2 values result from adding both terms. $N = 206$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Exhaustion: Adequate Yearly Progress \times noncounselor duties. Whether or not a school made AYP moderated the effect of assignment of both fair share and administrative duties. Assignment of these duties related to increased exhaustion among counselors at schools that made AYP (SFSA, $r[152] = .27, p < .001$; SCARS Administrative Activities (SAA), $r[155] = .18, p = .026$), but not at schools that did not make AYP (SFSA, $r[64] = .01, p = .92$; SAA, $r[67] = .07, p = .56$). As revealed in Figure 1, exhaustion remained high among those at schools that did not make AYP, regardless of fair share and administrative duties. However, at schools that did make AYP, exhaustion was lower when assignment of fair share and administrative duties was lower.

Exhaustion seemed to be central in how school counselors related their experience of burnout. The overwhelming majority of school counselors qualitatively described the meaning of burnout in terminology and symptoms congruent with emotional exhaustion. Participants described burnout in terms of feeling tired (27), overwhelmed (27), stressed (27), exhausted (23), lacking energy (22), becoming emotionally drained (16), and unable to cope and respond to daily demands (10). One participant characterized burnout as “reaching the bottom of psychological energy,” while another one added that burnout is “being unable to complete my duties of caring for and assisting my students because I am exhausted, stressed, or completely overwhelmed.”

Exhaustion: Caseload \times noncounselor duties. Assignment of clerical and fair share noncounseling duties differentially predicted exhaustion depending on caseload. Interestingly, the greatest variability and strongest relationships were at large caseloads (from 251–400; SCARS Clerical Activities (SCA), $r[74] = .50, p < .001$; SFSA, $r[73] = .39, p < .001$). In both cases, the lowest levels of exhaustion were seen for those with the fewest noncounseling duties.

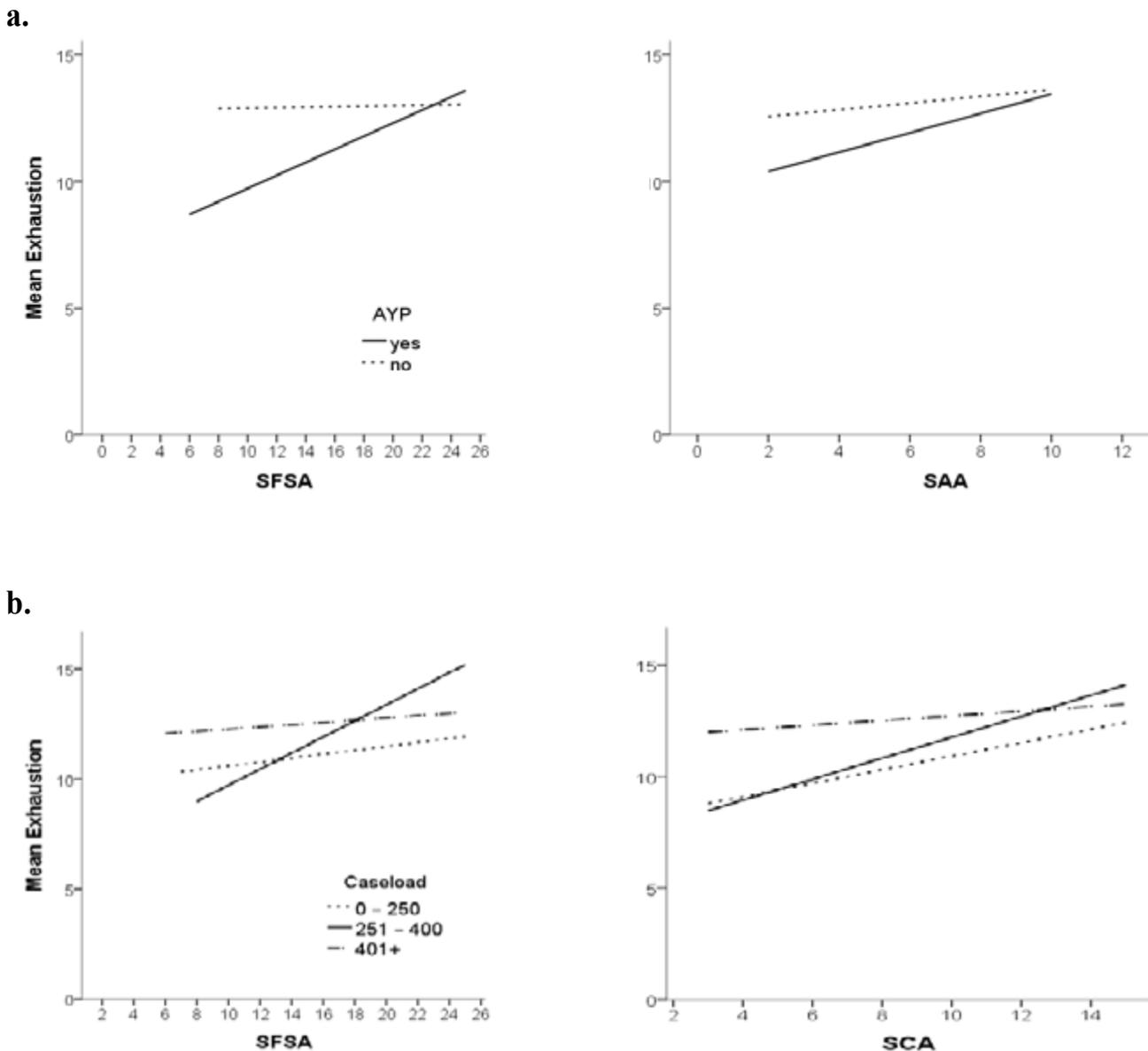


Figure 1. Mean predicted values of exhaustion as predicted by noncounselor duties as a function of (a) meeting AYP and (b) caseload.

Similar variability was seen at the ASCA-recommended level of moderate caseloads (fewer than 250) for assignment of clerical, but not fair share, duties related to exhaustion (SCA, $r[75] = .34, p = .003$; SFSA, $r[70] = .10, p = .38$). For counselors with the highest caseloads (greater than 400), assignment of clerical and fair share duties was not significantly or meaningfully related to exhaustion (SCA, $r[68] = .11, p = .37$; SFSA, $r[67] = .05, p = .66$). At the highest caseloads, exhaustion remained high regardless of fair share or clerical noncounselor duties. At a large caseload (and moderate caseloads as pertaining to clerical duties), exhaustion was lowest at the fewest noncounseling duties. It should be noted that for school counselors with caseloads at the ASCA-recommended levels (fewer than 250), exhaustion levels did not meaningfully increase even if fair share or clerical duties increased. Even though some school counselors defined burnout in terms of caseloads, this was not a major qualitative finding. One participant stated, when discussing caseload, “I am asked to provide critical services to 400 students and yet I make the same salary as teachers who are only responsible for educating one quarter of the students on my case load.”

Incompetence: Caseload × noncounselor duties. Assignment of fair share duties differentially related to incompetence as a function of caseload. It was only at a large caseload (251–400) that fair share duties predicted incompetence ($r[72] = .24, p = .04$). At moderate (0–250; $r[71] = -.07, p = .57$) and extra-large caseloads (more than 400; $r[66] = .12, p = .33$), assignment of fair share duties did not significantly or meaningfully relate to incompetence. As depicted in Figure 2, the lowest levels of incompetence are reported for those with moderate or large caseloads at low levels of fair share duties. For those at larger caseloads, though, incompetence increases as fair share duties increase, indicating that the assignment of fair share duties with the existence of large caseloads is related to school counselor self-reported incompetence levels. For those with small caseloads, levels of incompetence remain steady.

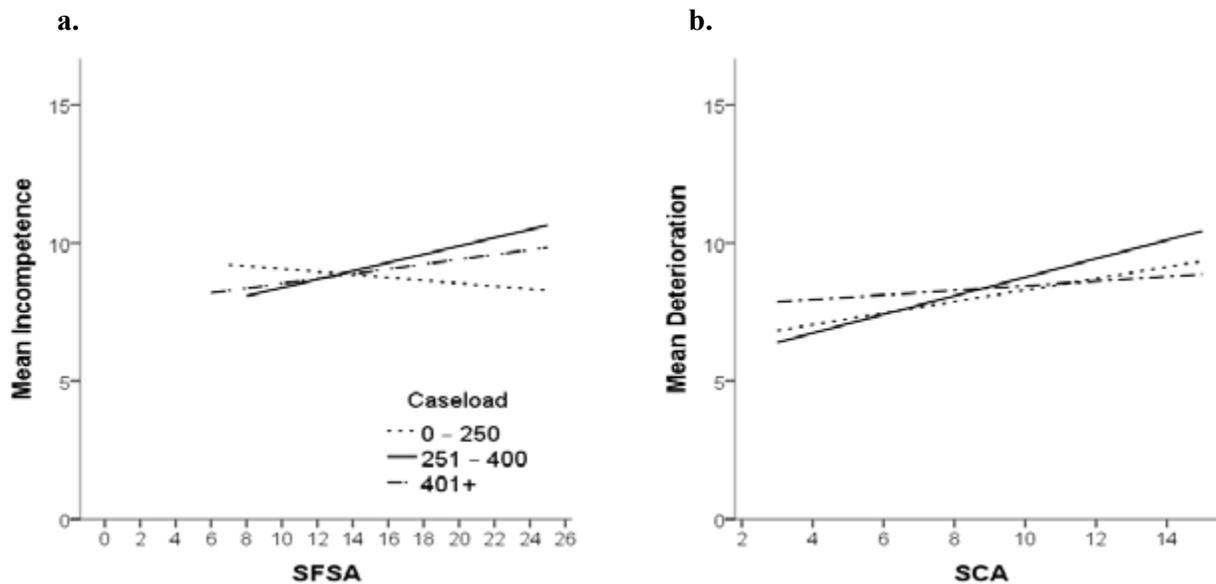


Figure 2. Mean predicted values of (a) incompetence as predicted by SFSA and (b) deterioration in personal life as predicted by SCA, both as a function of caseload.

Qualitative results indicated that reduced effectiveness also was a major common theme. Participants cited feeling that they were not effective (60) and no longer made a difference (12) as descriptors of burnout. One participant stated, “It means that I am no longer helpful to my students. I feel like I’m extremely tired and overworked and consequently my effectiveness as a school counselor is negatively impacted.” Yet another participant described burnout as “being overwhelmed by so many duties and responsibilities over an extended amount of time. The result in turn is being a less focused, determined, dedicated, effective school counselor.”

Deterioration in personal life: Caseload × noncounselor duties. Assignment of clerical duties related differently to deterioration in personal life depending on caseload. At an extra-large caseload (more than 400), the relationship between clerical duties and deterioration was not significant ($r[68] = .11, p = .37$). However, the relationship was positive at moderate (0–250; $r[75] = .25, p = .03$) and large caseloads (251–400; $r[74] = .38, p < .001$). As depicted in Figure 2, at moderate and large caseloads, deterioration in personal life starts out low with low levels of clerical duties, but increases as caseload increases. However, for those with the highest caseloads, deterioration in personal life remains steady.

Although not a major theme, qualitative results indicated that some participants discussed burnout in terms of a spillover effect (22), with symptoms experienced beyond the workplace and in school counselors’ personal

lives. One participant described burnout as “work becoming overwhelming enough that it is negatively affecting other parts of your life and dreading work every day because you do not think you can deal with anything else.”

Additional qualitative findings. Job dissatisfaction, a factor not examined quantitatively, was a major additional theme that emerged from the participants’ discussion of their experience of burnout. Several participants discussed burnout as simply going through the motions at work (9) and having difficulty continuing to do the job (18). One participant defined burnout as “no longer enjoying the job. Counting the days. Waiting for the weekend. Thinking about retirement too much. Rather not go to work.” Another participant discussed burnout as “waking up and not wanting to go to work . . . or being at work and just going through the motions. Dreaming of jobs where you don’t deal with emotions or hardships!”

Discussion

In sum, the quantitative results suggest that the assignment of noncounselor duties positively predicts burnout—especially exhaustion, negative work environment and deterioration in personal life (and incompetence to a lesser extent). Qualitative results echo these findings, as participants discussed their experience of burnout in terms of emotional exhaustion, reduced effectiveness, performance of noncounseling duties and being tied to organizational factors in their school setting. Another major qualitative theme emerging from the participants’ experience of burnout is job dissatisfaction. School counseling literature has noted that demands placed upon school counselors are rising (Cunningham & Sandhu, 2000; Gysbers et al., 1999; Herr, 2001), that many feel stressed and overwhelmed with the numerous job demands that have been placed on them (Kendrick et al., 1994; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006), and that performing inappropriate duties is linked to job dissatisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). However, the results of this study surpass current literature by providing support for the assignment of noncounseling duties as a predictor of burnout in school counselors.

More specifically, the results indicate that the assignment of clerical duties predicts exhaustion and deterioration in personal life, while the assignment of administrative duties predicts negative work environment. These results are supported by the qualitative findings: while the majority of school counselors surveyed viewed the assignment of noncounseling duties as having adverse personal and professional effects, or resignedly accepted them as a reality of the job, some counselors also reframed noncounseling duties within the context of their job, distinguishing fair share duties and suggesting that performing the latter was part of being a team, and even an opportunity to better perform their job.

Quantitative results, however, indicate that the assignment of fair share duties for school counselors who already have large or extra-large caseloads is related to increased feelings of incompetence in their jobs. Reduced effectiveness is also a major qualitative theme that emerged when participants discussed their experience of burnout. It appears that despite qualitative results supporting some counselors’ positive view of performing fair share duties, quantitative results also point out that fair share duties have negative effects for counselors with large caseloads, or for those working in a school that has not met AYP. This finding indicates that clerical and administrative duties may be potential areas for intervention and advocacy for school counselors. Furthermore, school counselors may benefit from taking into account particular school factors when evaluating the effect of fair share duties on burnout.

Results indicate that support from the school principal can reduce burnout, as a unique predictor and not as it interacts with noncounselor duties. This finding is congruent with Lee (2008), who reported that level of perceived support from the school principal was a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion, a dimension

of burnout, among school counselors. Although not a major theme, participants also linked principal support to their personal meaning of burnout, as some related it to a lack of organizational support and a negative work environment in their schools.

The results of moderation analyses suggest that meeting AYP can be a buffer against burnout as a result of fair share and administrative duties when those duties are low. Similarly, for school counselors working in a school that did not meet AYP, emotional exhaustion remains high, regardless of performing fair share or administrative duties. Schools that do not meet AYP are subject to interventions that can eventually lead to the replacement of staff, including school counselors, a stressor that is potentially more threatening than performing a low level of noncounseling duties. Although not a major qualitative theme, participants discussed budgetary constraints and accountability standards as stressors in their work environment. Although the consequences of not meeting AYP have been implicated in increased stress for school staff and in negative impacts on school climate (Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Thompson & Crank, 2010), no other studies to date have examined the relationship between meeting AYP, performing noncounseling duties and experiencing school counselor burnout.

Similarly, a low or moderate caseload can be a buffer against exhaustion related to fair share and clerical duties, but only when those duties are lower. At higher levels of noncounselor duties, even meeting AYP or having a lower caseload does not buffer against exhaustion. These findings seem consistent with previous research exploring school counselor demands: although caseload size was rated by participants as demanding, it was secondary to paperwork requirements, a duty that fits the noncounseling duties category (McCarthy et al., 2010). These results also are supported by the qualitative findings: while performing noncounseling duties is a major theme related to the experience of burnout, caseload does not feature prominently. However, the distinction in caseload numbers, based on ASCA recommendations, seems to be a meaningful one; if number of caseloads is at or below the recommended 250, levels of emotional exhaustion do not increase even if noncounseling duties are high. Caseloads that exceed the 400 threshold increase emotional exhaustion regardless of noncounseling duties. It seems that counselors operating at those very high caseloads are experiencing exhaustion from the sheer number of students they must serve, regardless of performing noncounseling duties.

Implications for Practice: School Counselors and Counselor Educators

It is evident from this study that school counselors face many organizational challenges that may make them vulnerable to experiencing the negative effects of burnout. Supervisors may be the first to notice stressed-out counselors and be privy to feelings and concerns related to those challenges (Lee et al., 2010). In a school setting, principals can have extensive influence on determining the role of the school counselors with whom they work (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007). Research suggests that when compared to school counselors, principals seem to underestimate the time that school counselors spend on clerical and administrative noncounseling duties, and place more importance on the performance of other noncounseling duties such as record keeping, coordinating the standardized testing program and scheduling (Finkelstein, 2009). As few graduate programs in administration include courses in school counseling, school principals may receive little training or education regarding the appropriate role of the school counselor and the nature of the comprehensive school counseling program, making school counselor advocacy even more imperative (Dollarhide et al., 2007; Fitch, Newby, Ballesteros, & Marshall, 2001). It appears that administrators may especially benefit from a discussion regarding the school counselor's role (Amatea & Clark, 2005), and that facilitating an increased awareness of school counselor burnout may result in interventions dedicated to preventing and ameliorating burnout (Lee et al., 2010).

Counselor educators also are responsible for advocating for the profession and promoting best practices for school counselors. They are uniquely positioned to expose future school counselors to quality training and resources. Indeed, adequate training can reduce role stress for school counselors (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005). Membership in professional organizations can serve as an important resource for beginning school counselors, as it can reduce the likelihood of becoming isolated and encourage practices according to professional standards (Baker & Gerler, 2004). Resources such as self-assessment tools that can be shared with principals to identify gaps in perceptions and priorities, and strategies for promoting collaboration and preventing burnout, are all available through professional organizations and publications. Equipping school counselors with knowledge, resources and strategies to optimize effectiveness early in their careers may better prepare them for the challenges inherent in their profession.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

Certain limitations in this study may have affected the reported outcomes. First, utilizing a volunteer sample of school counselors who were exclusively members of ASCA poses a limit to generalizability. Despite use of a nationwide sample, responses cannot be generalized to school counselors who may not belong to ASCA. It also is possible that school counselors experiencing the most severe form of burnout may be underrepresented in this study, as those active in professional organizations may be less likely to experience high levels of burnout. As all data gathered in this study utilized self-reports, school counselors experiencing high levels of burnout may have opted out due to the uncomfortable nature of the topic.

Second, the addition of the open-ended questions to the quantitative questionnaire did not result in an extensive qualitative data set or the opportunity for additional follow-up discussion, providing only specific qualitative data from one point in time. However, the method of employing written responses to open-ended questions to gain broad information on sensitive topics (such as occupational burnout) has merit in this study (Friborg & Rosenvinge, 2013; Montero-Marín et al., 2013) and can be successfully utilized to triangulate or converge quantitative data (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005).

Replicating the results of this study with a random sample of school counselors who are practicing nationwide but are not exclusively ASCA members may increase the representativeness of the sample. Multi-informant, multi-method data would be useful in further examining burnout and the assignment of noncounseling duties and enhancing validity. Future studies utilizing a mixed-methods approach could incorporate semistructured interviews to collect more in-depth qualitative responses and enrich school counseling literature on burnout.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The authors reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

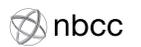
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Perceptions of the Importance and Utilization of Clinical Supervision Among Certified Rural School Counselors



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 444–454
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/kd.4.5.444

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This study explored rural school counselors' perceptions of clinical supervision. School counselors working in rural communities commonly encounter issues that challenge their ability to provide competent counseling services to the students they serve. School counselors serving in these areas are often the only rural mental health provider in their community, and they may lack access to other professionals to meet supervision needs. Participants' ($n = 118$) current experiences and future needs were investigated concurrently with supervision training and delivery methods most desired. The majority of school counselors in the study reported that they perceive clinical supervision as an important element in their continued personal and professional growth. However, these school counselors reported not receiving supervision at an individual, group or peer level. The need for the supervision is apparent; however, access to supervision in rural areas is limited. Implications for school counselors and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Keywords: rural school counselors, clinical supervision, supervision training, personal and professional growth, rural mental health

With increasing regularity, school counselors are finding themselves on the front lines of using clinical counseling skills to address issues their students bring to school (Teich, Robinson, & Weist, 2007; Walley, Grothaus, & Craigen, 2009). Despite an increase in the mental health needs of school-aged children (Perfect & Morris, 2011), limited mental health services are a reality in rural areas (Bain, Rueda, Mata-Villarreal, & Mundy, 2011). Although there is not a clear definition of the term *rural*, the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) has characterized urban areas as those with 50,000 or more people, and urban clusters as those communities with a population of 2,500–49,999. School counselors working in rural communities commonly encounter issues that challenge their ability to provide competent counseling services to students (Cates, Gunderson, & Keim, 2012). In fact, school counselors serving in rural areas are often the only mental health provider in their community, and they may lack access to other professionals to meet supervision needs (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009). With mental health needs in rural areas being greater than the resources available, and rural school counselors indicating a need for more mental health training and resources to close this gap (Bain et al., 2011), meeting the professional needs of rural school counselors becomes imperative.

Bradley and Ladany (2010) described the competent school counselor as a skilled clinician able to identify and meet the unique needs of the students he or she serves. They further asserted that rural areas provide unique demands for the school counselor, who is often expected to provide a wide range of services to a diverse

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population. Despite recommendations that professional counselors obtain supervision throughout their careers, traditional face-to-face supervision meetings are not always feasible and rural counselors may not have direct access to a supervisor, even though they have a desire for one (Luke, Ellis, & Bernard, 2011; Tyson, Pérusse, & Stone, 2008). Although there is a need for trained professional supervisors, supervision in rural areas is difficult to obtain for many counselors because of the distance between professionals, which creates geographic isolation (Wood, Miller, & Hargrove, 2005).

There are a number of challenges to receiving quality supervision. Rural school counselors encounter isolation, lack of time and money, a lack of specialists, and decreased personal interaction (McMahon & Simons, 2004). All of these characteristics of working in a rural setting make supervision and consultation, which are essential in the development of a professional identity, difficult to obtain (McMahon & Simons, 2004).

Clinical supervision is designed to aid the professional counselor in enhancing professional skill and ethical competency (Bradley & Ladany, 2010). A clinical supervisor in the schools must be a professional who is not only competent in the realm of school counseling functions, but also in supervision practices (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). The supervision element of school counseling is further complicated as there often is a need for different types of supervision. There is need for both administrative and clinical supervision for practicing school counselors (Bradley & Ladany, 2010), and at times these different types of supervision may conflict with one another. Administrative supervision focuses on policies and procedures governing the school community, and this form of supervision in a school setting is most often performed by a school administrator who may not have a counseling background (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998). In comparison, clinical supervision is an intervention that a senior member of the profession delivers to a junior member in order to enhance professional abilities and monitor the counseling services offered (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). This reality of school counseling supervision would suggest that those providing clinical supervision need to not only be certified as school counselors in order to qualify as senior members of the profession, but also have supervision training in order to effectively carry out supervision interventions.

For school counselors, supervision is a direct venue for providing or receiving support and feedback (Lambie, 2007). Both peer consultation and supervision are related to lower levels of stress in school counselors (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005). There is evidence that obtaining clinical supervision is indeed beneficial to school counselors, with research pointing to professional and personal gains, including enhanced counseling skills, sense of professionalism, support and job comfort (Agnew, Vaught, Getz, & Fortune, 2000). There also are a number of studies examining the protective utility of clinical supervision regarding school counselor burnout. Prevention of burnout is an important issue for rural school counselors who report feelings of frustration as they struggle to provide as much counseling as possible to their students (Bain et al., 2011).

When assessing the effect of clinical supervision on burnout, Feldstein (2000) reported that clinical supervision had a positive effect on reducing levels of emotional exhaustion and burnout in school counselors. In a recent study, Moyer (2011) reported that the amount of clinical supervision received was a significant predictor of overall burnout in school counselors (as well as the dimensions of incompetence, negative work environment and devaluing clients). These findings support the notion that clinical supervision may serve as an important protective factor against burnout for school counselors, and even ameliorate burnout levels once manifested. A similar recommendation was provided by Lambie (2007), who identified clinical supervision as an essential resource that can be utilized to overcome school counselor burnout.

Even though administrative supervision generally is available to school counselors, clinical supervision usually is not (Herlihy, Gray, & McCollum, 2002). Page, Pietrzak, and Sutton (2001) reported in their national survey ($n = 267$) that only 13% of school counselors were receiving individual clinical supervision and only 10% were receiving group clinical supervision, despite a desire to obtain supervision. A study examining rural school principals' perceptions of school counselors' role noted that approximately 12% of all respondents deemed professional development of little importance for school counselors (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009). Consequently, clinical supervision may not be supported in rural settings, as time spent in supervision may be seen as time taken away from understaffed schools.

Clinical supervision is best delivered by a counselor who is not only trained in supervision but who is also familiar with K–12 school settings (Bradley & Ladany, 2010). Despite school counselors' desire to obtain more clinical supervision once working in a school setting, many face a challenge in obtaining such supervision. Peterson and Deuschle (2006) also discussed hesitation from school counselors to be supervisors, which could result from discomfort with the requirements of site supervision, or a feeling of being poorly trained in supervision. Supervision is, however, an important part of developing the professional and ethical decision-making skills that benefit clients and their stakeholders (Lambie, Ieva, Mullen, & Hayes, 2011). Due to these needs, developing trained school counselor supervisors is a vigorous step in meeting the supervision needs of school counselor trainees and practicing professionals (Page et al., 2001).

The purpose of the current study was twofold. The first purpose was to assess the current perceptions of certified school counselors serving in rural settings (RCSCs) regarding their clinical supervision experience and needs. The second purpose was to compare and contrast the current data with empirical data obtained 9 years ago in this same state from RCSCs, in order to examine whether the supervision needs of counselors in rural settings has changed. Specifically, the study was designed to answer the following research questions: (a) What are RCSC perceptions of the importance of individual, group and peer supervision? (b) What are participants' current experiences with individual, group and peer supervision? (c) What are participants' perceptions of their future need for clinical supervision? (d) If the training were available to equip a participant with the theory and skills to provide clinical supervision, how would respondents rate the importance of this training and by what means would participants prefer to receive this training? (e) How do current RCSC experiences and perceptions of individual, group and peer clinical supervision compare to the findings in a 2003 study of RCSCs?

In this study, *RCSC* refers to an individual certified by a state department of education working in a school in a state where the majority of school districts have fewer than 1,000 students. The terms *certified* and *licensed* are interchangeable. *Clinical supervision* is defined as an intensive, interpersonal focused relationship, usually performed one-to-one or in a small group, in which the supervisor facilitates the counselor(s) learning to apply a wider variety of assessment and counseling methods to increasingly complex cases (Bradley & Ladany, 2010). A *clinical supervisor* refers to a certified school counselor, licensed mental health professional counselor, social worker or psychologist who has at least 5 years' experience in the field. *Administrative supervision* is defined as an ongoing process in which the supervisor oversees staff as well as the planning, implementation and evaluation of individuals and programs (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998).

Method

Participants

The target population for this study included all certified school counselors (CSCs) in a Midwestern state who were employed in a public or private school setting during the school year 2011–2012. Recruitment of participants was conducted by obtaining a list of all CSCs from the state's Department of Education. All

individuals who were identified as meeting these criteria received an e-mail. The e-mail directed participants to an online survey titled The 2012 School Counselor Survey. The number of CSCs provided by the Department of Education was 476. A total of 127 CSCs responded to the invitation to take part in this study, all of whom met the criteria for employment in a rural setting, resulting in a response rate of 27%. Respondents with missing or invalid data ($n = 9$, less than 7%) were eliminated via listwise deletion, leaving a total number of 118 participants in this study. Listwise deletion entails eliminating participants with missing data on any of the variables and is the appropriate method for removal of missing data due to this study's sufficient sample size (Sterner, 2011).

Of the 118 participants (91 women, 27 men), 110 identified their cultural/racial background as Caucasian, five identified as Native American and three identified as Multiracial. Thirty-four participants stated their age as 25–35 years, 31 as 36–45 years, 30 as 46–55 years and 23 as 56 years or older. The majority of the respondents identified as married ($n = 96$), 15 as single and seven as having a life partner or being in a committed relationship. Twelve of the participants stated that they had 2 or fewer years of experience as school counselors, 18 had 3–5 years, 25 had 6–10 years, 42 had 11–20 years, 19 had 21–30 years and two stated that they had 40 or more years of experience. Regarding licenses and certifications held, 109 of the participants stated that they were South Dakota CSCs, 36 were National Certified Counselors, 12 were Licensed Professional Counselors, two held the Licensed Professional Counselor–Mental Health designation and one participant identified as a National Certified School Counselor.

Regarding the number of schools under participants' direct responsibility, 86 indicated that they had one school, 21 had two schools, five had three schools, four had four schools and two had five schools. Five participants stated that they were responsible for direct counseling services for 100 or fewer students, 14 for 101–200 students, 22 for 201–300 students, 29 for 301–400 students, 18 for 401–500 students, 14 for 501–600 students, 10 for 601–700 students and six for 701 or more students. Twenty-one stated that there were no other school counselors in their school district, 15 stated that there was one other school counselor, 17 stated that there were two others, 13 stated that there were three to five, 29 stated that there were six to 11, seven stated that there were 12–18, six stated that there were 20–25, four stated that there were 45–50, five stated that there were 52–56 and one stated that there were 60 other school counselors in the participant's district. Regarding the number of other school counselors working with them in the same building, 58 respondents stated that there were no other counselors, five stated that there was another part-time counselor, 29 stated that there was one other full-time counselor, 11 stated that there were two, four stated that there were three, five stated that there were four and six participants stated that there were five other counselors in their building.

Instrumentation

Participants completed a modified version of the school counselor survey used by Page et al. (2001) in their national survey of school counselor supervision. The modifications included additional questions related to participants' perceptions of the usefulness of receiving supervision and supervision training via distance methods. Distance methods included the statewide video conferencing system, teleconference and e-mail. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 19.0) was utilized to screen the data, gather descriptive data and analyze the data, as well as to determine frequencies and percentages for the demographic variables. To answer the research questions, data were analyzed by creating tables using SPSS to determine frequencies, averages and percentages. For research questions 1, 2 and 3, a Fisher's Exact Test (a variant of the chi-square test for independence for small sample sizes) with an alpha level of .05 was used to determine whether there was a relationship between a participant's age, years of experience, number of schools under the participant's direct responsibility, number of students for whom the participant had to provide counseling services, the presence of other CSCs in the building and district, and the participant's responses.

Results

Importance of Supervision

Participants ranked the importance of individual clinical supervision based on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = not important to 6 = extremely important). When the participants' indications of the top three options were combined, 79% ($n = 93$) rated the importance of obtaining clinical supervision as important, very important or extremely important, leaving 21% ($n = 25$) of participants who reported it being somewhat important, minimally important or not important. When asked about the importance of obtaining administrative supervision, 72% ($n = 85$) rated it as important, very important or extremely important, leaving 28% ($n = 33$) who reported it being somewhat important, minimally important or not important.

Cross-tabulation tables were conducted for each of the following variables: (a) age, (b) years of experience as a school counselor, (c) number of schools for which the counselor is responsible, (d) number of students for whom the counselor is responsible, (e) other school counselors in the district and (f) other school counselors in the building. A Fisher's Exact Test with an alpha level of .05 was used to determine whether there was a relationship between these variables and participants' perceptions of the importance of individual clinical and administrative supervision. These analyses determined that there was no significant relationship between these variables (age, $p = .641$; years of experience, $p = .597$; number of schools for which counselor is responsible, $p = .516$; number of students for whom counselor is responsible, $p = .228$; other school counselors in district, $p = .319$; other school counselors in building, $p = .382$).

Current Experiences with Supervision

When participants described the current supervision they were receiving, 94% ($n = 111$) stated that they were receiving no individual clinical supervision, and 6% ($n = 7$) stated that they were receiving individual clinical supervision. Of the participants receiving this type of supervision, one received supervision once a week, three received supervision once a month and three received supervision less than once a month. Ninety-one percent ($n = 108$) stated that they were not engaging in group supervision and 8% ($n = 10$) stated that they were, with seven of these respondents stating that they participated in group supervision once a month and three stating that they participated less than once a month. When asked to describe their clinical supervisor, seven stated that the supervisor was a guidance director, two stated that he or she was another school counselor and one stated that he or she was a psychologist.

Of the 14% ($n = 17$) of respondents who stated that they were receiving individual and/or group supervision, 11 reported that their school system was incurring the cost for supervision, four stated that they were shouldering all the cost themselves and two stated that they and their school system were paying the cost together. Eighty-eight percent ($n = 104$) indicated that their school district did not provide release time for them to attend supervision; the remaining 12% ($n = 14$) did receive release time. Eighty-two percent ($n = 97$) reported that they were not engaging in peer supervision, and 18% ($n = 21$) were obtaining peer supervision. Of the respondents receiving peer supervision, ten stated that it occurred once a week, one stated that it was every other week, eight stated that it was once a month, and two stated that it was less than once a month. Regarding administrative supervision, 81% ($n = 97$) stated that they were engaging in it; 19% ($n = 21$) were not. Sixty-four participants stated that their administrative supervision was conducted by a principal, seven stated that it was a vice principal, seven stated that it was another school counselor, five reported that it was a superintendent, five stated that it was a guidance director, five that stated it was a director of a specific program area (e.g., special education, student services) and three stated that their administrative supervision was conducted by a vice superintendent.

Cross-tabulation tables were conducted for each of the following variables: (a) age, (b) years of experience as a school counselor, (c) number of schools for which the counselor is responsible, (d) number of students for whom the counselor is responsible, (e) other school counselors in the district and (f) other school counselors in the building. A Fisher's Exact Test with an alpha level of .05 was used to determine whether there was a relationship between these variables and participants' current experiences with individual and/or group clinical supervision and/or peer supervision. The results indicated that there was a relationship between receiving group supervision and the number of other school counselors in participants' district ($p = .010$), and a relationship between participants' age and current participation in peer supervision ($p = .017$). All other analyses for these variables determined no significant relationship.

Future Need for Clinical Supervision

Participants ranked their need for future clinical supervision based on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = not important to 6 = extremely important). When the participants' indications of the top three options were combined, 54% ($n = 64$) rated the importance of receiving clinical supervision in the future as important, very important or extremely important, leaving 46% ($n = 54$) who reported it being somewhat important, minimally important or not important. When respondents were asked whom they considered the most desirable person to be their clinical supervisor, 64% ($n = 75$) indicated another school counselor with specific training in supervision. Eighteen percent stated that the best supervisor would be a professor in counselor education, 6% indicated a mental health counselor, 6% specified a school psychologist, 5% indicated a psychologist, 2% identified a psychiatrist and 1% specified a social worker with a master's degree.

Cross-tabulation tables were created for each of the independent variables: (a) cultural/racial background, (b) age, (c) years of experience as a school counselor, d) licensure/certification status, e) number of schools for which the counselor is responsible, f) number of students for whom the counselor is responsible, g) other school counselors in the district and h) other school counselors in the building. A Fisher's Exact Test with an alpha level of .05 was used to determine whether there was a relationship between these variables and participants' perceptions of their future need for clinical supervision. The results indicated that there was a relationship between participants' age and their perception of their need for future clinical supervision ($p = .016$). All other analyses for these variables determined no significant relationship.

Future Training and Education Needs

When asked about the level of perceived importance of training and education regarding supervision theory and clinical supervision skills, when those were provided, participants ranked importance on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = not important to 6 = extremely important). After the participants' indications of the top three options were combined, 67% ($n = 79$) rated the importance of receiving future clinical supervision training as important, very important or extremely important, leaving 33% ($n = 39$) who reported it being somewhat important, minimally important or not important. Of the 118 participants, the majority ($n = 90$) had access to the state's video conferencing system. Fifty-three of the participants stated that they had access to Skype or another real-time communication system; therefore, over half of the participants ($n = 65$) stated that they did not have access. Fifty-three percent ($n = 62$) of the participants rated receiving supervision training via face-to-face workshop or conference as either very important or extremely important, whereas 32% ($n = 27$) rated receiving future clinical supervision training via video conferencing or teleconference as very important or extremely important.

Regarding the type of supervision training they wished to receive, 81% ($n = 96$) of the participants characterized training on developing specific supervision skills and techniques as important, very important

or extremely important. When asked about wanting training to be able to assist supervisees in developing a respectful outlook on individual differences, 71% ($n = 84$) of the participants noted this type of training as either important, very important or extremely important. Regarding developing supervisees' clinical skill set for counseling others of a different age, ethnicity, race, religion or sexual orientation, 75% ($n = 89$) of the participants ranked this type of training as either important, very important or extremely important. Seventy-seven percent ($n = 91$) of the participants ranked the development of supervision skills to assist supervisees in developing independence and self-directedness as important, very important or extremely important.

Comparing 2012 and 2003 Findings

In 2003 the first author completed a study of 267 RCSCs who took the 2003 School Counselor Survey (Duncan, 2003). Nearly 67% of the 2003 participants rated individual clinical supervision as important, very or extremely important; however, 91% stated that they were not receiving individual clinical supervision, and 92% stated they were not receiving group clinical supervision. In the current study, conducted 9 years later, we note an increase in the importance that school counselors place on receiving clinical supervision, but similar low rates of actually receiving clinical supervision. Specifically, in the current study, 79% of participants rated receiving clinical supervision as important, very important or extremely important; however, 94% stated that they were not receiving individual clinical supervision, and 91% stated they were not receiving group clinical supervision. Those receiving group supervision appear to work in settings where they are not the only counselor in their school.

Limitations

This study has three main limitations. First, the sample was obtained from an e-mail list of certified school counselors in one Midwestern state. The ability to generalize the findings to other states may be limited—especially to states that do not have a similar rural nature. Future research that examines all RCSCs would be beneficial. The second limitation of this study is that those who chose to participate may have answered the survey questions differently than members of the population who did not agree to participate might have answered them. The third limitation is due to the survey being a self-report measure, as the participants may have given answers that they believed to be socially desirable. In spite of being informed in advance that their responses would remain anonymous, the participants still may have answered in a way that did not portray their true feelings or knowledge.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the large majority of school counselors surveyed (79%) perceive clinical supervision as important. This number is in stark contrast to the actual number of school counselors receiving supervision, with the overwhelming majority of the participants stating that they are not receiving any individual or group supervision (94% and 91%, respectively). Although these findings confirm the results of previous studies conducted with school counselors that point to a clinical supervision deficit (Borders & Usher, 1992; Page et al., 2001; Roberts & Borders, 1994; Shanks-Pruett, 1991), the extremely low clinical supervision rates from the current study also may be tapping into challenges specific to rural school counselors. It is possible that many practicing rural school counselors have not engaged in supervision since their university training program and feel unequipped to answer questions about its nature or importance, which could potentially have larger implications regarding these counselors' clinical skill application. Similarly, Spence, Wilson, Kavanagh, Strong, and Worrall (2001) noted that lack of skill application contributed to counselors' difficulty in obtaining supervision. Compared to results obtained from a 2003 study with this population, although school counselors

increasingly perceive clinical supervision as important (79% vs. 67% in the 2003 study), rates of obtaining clinical supervision have not changed substantially in almost 10 years. This may indicate that challenges for rural school counselors persist and that they may be at a disadvantage regarding their clinical skills and professional development.

Even for those few school counselors who reported receiving individual or group clinical supervision, current supervision practices are far from ideal. Of the seven participants who reported currently receiving supervision, four reported receiving it only once a month or less, and over 88% of participants shared that their school will not provide release time for them to pursue supervision. This may imply that school administrators do not understand the importance of clinical supervision. Herlihy et al. (2002) pointed out the erroneous perception that school counselors do not have the same need for clinical supervision as their mental health counterparts as a factor that impedes clinical supervision for school counselors. The possibility also exists that even though school counselors in this study see the need for clinical supervision, they may not be advocating for it. Rural school counselors may have to consider ways to receive clinical supervision in a manner that does not take time away from their duties or occurs outside school time. Although this may place additional strain on school counselors, forgoing clinical supervision altogether may have negative implications for their personal and professional well-being. Crutchfield and Borders (1997) warned that school counselors who do not receive supervisory support may find themselves dealing with increased stress and may feel overworked, burned out and isolated; and the literature clearly points out the benefits of clinical supervision for school counselors, including increased feelings of support, job satisfaction, enhanced skill development and competencies, and greater accountability (Herlihy et al., 2002; Lambie, 2007).

Although the majority of participants (81%) reported receiving administrative supervision, this form of supervision is conducted by noncounselors. This result supports other literature indicating that school counselors typically receive administrative supervision (Herlihy et al., 2002; Page et al., 2001). However, administrative supervision conducted by school personnel who are not trained in counselor supervision or the professional school counselor's role does not assist school counselors in enhancing clinical skills and does not meet their professional development needs.

More than half of the participants (54%) said that they can see a need for clinical supervision in their future, an increase from 47% in 2003, and the majority of participants would want to receive this clinical supervision from another school counselor. Of extreme importance, is the fact that there is no supervision training in most master's-level school counseling preparation programs. The majority of school counseling practitioners who might be asked to supervise others (colleagues or counselors-in-training) do not have specialized training to provide this service. Even though 45% of respondents had supervised interns, 85% shared that they had no formal training. Over 67% of school counselors surveyed reported that they desired supervision training, with over half (53%) stating that they would prefer a face-to-face approach. Participants identified the following areas as ones in which they wanted training: gaining specific supervision skills (81%), acquiring skills to assist supervisees in developing individual skills and self-direction (77%), learning how to develop their supervisees' skills (75%) and developing respect for individual differences (71%).

Implications for School Counselors

Use of technology for supervision delivery is still a relatively new concept for some professionals. Even though the American Counseling Association clearly states in its Code of Ethics (American Counseling Association, 2014) that reviewing supervisee practice, in addition to live observation, can occur through the use of technology, most school counselors have not had an opportunity to utilize technology as an avenue to gain supervision. Technological advances have made supervision delivery more available, and the use of these technologies may ultimately save individuals travel time and money. While the majority of respondents share

a preference for supervision in a face-to-face format, school counselors may become more comfortable with electronic formats as they utilize them more often or with further training.

Counselor educators and supervision trainers will need to use creative methods when scheduling supervision training for professional school counselors. Weekend workshops, intensive summer courses and cooperative in-service programs might be used to provide supervision training. Collaborative efforts between university counselor training programs and state school counselor professional organizations could further orchestrate these opportunities. Counselor educators also might advocate to the Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs that supervision training be required in master's-level school counselor training programs. School counselors desiring supervision may need assistance in advocating for these services. Research indicates that engaging school principals in counseling education can result in a deeper understanding and collaboration between the school counselor and the principal (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). It is essential to help administrators understand the benefits of clinical supervision and make a case for the provision of opportunities for professional development and clinical supervision for rural school counselors, especially as these opportunities may positively impact burnout incidence.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study provide potential directions for future research. Given the limited literature on clinical supervision for rural school counselors, it is important to fully examine any potential factors that may help conceptualize this phenomenon. Following up with a qualitative study would expand on the quantitative findings and provide a richer context for some of the results discussed. This might help identify additional factors of importance specific to rural school counselors.

Replicating the results of the current study with a random sample of rural school counselors who are practicing nationwide might increase the representativeness of the sample. Utilizing a sampling of rural school counselors who are practicing in only one state presents inherent limitations, as the results discussed may be specific to geographic location and may not apply to rural school counselors in other states.

Conclusion

The majority of school counselors in both the 2003 and 2012 studies reported that they perceive clinical supervision as an important element in their continued personal and professional growth. However, these same groups reported that they are not receiving supervision at an individual, group or peer level. The need for the supervision is apparent, but the access to supervision is limited.

This situation calls for collaborative and coordinated action from counselor educators and leaders in the field. Creation of supervision training opportunities for practicing school counselors is warranted. Methods such as the utilization of technology to allow access to supervision for school counselors, especially for those in remote rural areas, are also important elements in the creation of an effective and efficient statewide supervision plan.

Buy-in from school administrators, school officials at the state level, school boards and counselor educators will be an important aspect of the origination of a statewide system. The need for supervision for rural school counselors is supported through these survey results. It will be imperative to create methods for continued evaluation of a statewide supervision plan to show how the ultimate consumers—the students—are benefitting from school counselors who are receiving supervision.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The authors reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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Development of a Logic Model to Guide Evaluations of the ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 455–466
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/im.4.5.455

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A logic model was developed based on an analysis of the 2012 American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model in order to provide direction for program evaluation initiatives. The logic model identified three outcomes (increased student achievement/gap reduction, increased school counseling program resources, and systemic change and school improvement), seven outputs (student change, parent involvement, teacher competence, school policies and processes, competence of the school counselors, improvements in the school counseling program, and administrator support), six major clusters of activities (direct services, indirect services, school counselor personnel evaluation, program management processes, program evaluation processes and program advocacy) and two inputs (foundational elements and program resources). The identification of these logic model components and linkages among these components was used to identify a number of necessary and important evaluation studies of the ASCA National Model.

Keywords: ASCA National Model, school counseling, logic model, program evaluation, evaluation studies

Since its initial publication in 2003, *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* has had a dramatic impact on the practice of school counseling (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2003). Many states have revised their model of school counseling to make it consistent with this model (Martin, Carey, & DeCoster, 2009), and many schools across the country have implemented the ASCA National Model. The ASCA Web site, for example, currently lists over 400 schools from 33 states that have won a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) award since 2003 as recognition for exemplary implementation of the model (ASCA, 2013).

While the ASCA National Model has had a profound impact on the practice of school counseling, very few studies have been published that evaluate the model itself. Evaluation is necessary to determine if the implementation of the model results in the model's anticipated benefits and to determine how the model can be improved. The key studies typically cited (see ASCA, 2005) as supporting the effectiveness of the ASCA National Model (e.g., Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997) were actually conducted before the model was developed and were designed as evaluations of Comprehensive Developmental Guidance, which is an important precursor and component of the ASCA National Model, but not the model itself.

Two recent statewide evaluations of school counseling programs focused on the relationships between the level of implementation of the ASCA National Model and student outcomes. In a statewide evaluation of school counseling programs in Nebraska, Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Hoffman (2012) found that the extent to which a school counseling program had a well-implemented, differentiated delivery system consistent with

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practices advocated by the ASCA National Model was associated with lower suspension rates, lower discipline incident rates, higher attendance rates, higher math proficiency and higher reading proficiency. These results suggest that model implementation is associated with increased student engagement, fewer disciplinary problems and higher student achievement. In a similar statewide evaluation study in Utah, Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Stevens (2012) found that the extent to which the school counseling program had a programmatic orientation, similar to that advocated in the ASCA National Model, was associated with both higher average ACT scores and a higher number of students taking the ACT. This suggests that model implementation is associated with both increased achievement and a broadening of student interest in college. While these studies suggest that benefits to students are associated with the implementation of the ASCA National Model, additional evaluations are necessary that use stronger (e.g., quasi-experimental and longitudinal) designs and investigate specific components of the model in order to determine their effectiveness or how they can be improved.

There are several possible reasons why the ASCA National Model has not been evaluated extensively. The school counseling field as a whole has struggled with general evaluation issues. For example, questions have been raised regarding the effectiveness of practitioner training in evaluation (Astramovich, Coker, & Hoskins, 2005; Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999; Sexton, Whiston, Bleuer, & Walz, 1997; Trevisan, 2000); practitioners have cited lack of time, evaluation resources and administrative support as major barriers to evaluation (Loesch, 2001; Lusky & Hayes, 2001); and some practitioners have feared that poor evaluation results may negatively impact their program credibility (Isaacs, 2003; Schmidt, 1995). Another contributing factor is that while the importance of evaluation is stressed in the literature, few actual examples of program evaluations and program evaluation results have been published (Astramovich & Coker, 2007; Martin & Carey, 2012; Martin et al., 2009; Trevisan, 2002).

In addition, there are several features of the ASCA National Model that make evaluations difficult. First, the model is complex, containing many components grouped into four interrelated, functional subsystems referred to as the foundation, delivery system, management system and accountability system. Second, ASCA created the National Model by combining elements of existing models that were developed by different individuals and groups. For example, the principle influences of the model (ASCA, 2012) are cited as Gysbers and Henderson (2000), Johnson and Johnson (2001) and Myrick (2003). Furthermore, principles and concepts derived from important movements such as the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (Martin, 2002) and evidence-based school counseling (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007) also were incorporated into the model during its development. While these preexisting models and movements share some common features, they differ in important ways. Elements of these approaches were combined and incorporated into the ASCA National Model without a full integration of their philosophical and theoretical perspectives and principles. Consequently, the ASCA National Model does not reflect a single cohesive approach to program organization and management. Instead, it reflects a collection of presumably effective principles and practices that have been applied in school counseling programs. Third, instruments for measuring important aspects of model implementation are lacking (Clemens, Carey, & Harrington, 2010). Fourth, the theory of action of the ASCA National Model has not been fully explicated, so it is difficult to determine what specific benefits are intended to result from the implementation of specific elements of the model. For example, it is not entirely clear how changing the performance evaluation of counselors is related to the desired benefits of the model.

In this article, the authors present the results of their work in developing a logic model for the ASCA National Model. Logic modeling is a systematic approach to enabling high-quality program evaluation through processes designed to result in pictorial representations of the theory of action of a program (Frechtling, 2007). Logic modeling surfaces and summarizes the explicit and implicit logic of how a program operates to produce its desired benefits and results. By applying logic modeling to an analysis of the ASCA National Model, the

authors intended to fully explicate the relationships between structures and activities advocated by the model and their anticipated benefits so that these relationships can be tested in future evaluations of the model.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to develop a useful logic model that describes the workings of the ASCA National Model in order to promote its evaluation. More specifically, the purpose was to mine the logic elements, program outcomes and implicit (unstated) assumptions about the relationships between program elements and outcomes. In developing this logic model, the authors followed the processes suggested by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2004) and Frechtling (2007). Several different frameworks exist for logic models, but the authors elected to use Frechtling's framework because it focuses specifically on promoting evaluation of an existing program (as opposed to other possible uses such as program planning). This framework identifies the relationships among program inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. Inputs refer to the resources needed to deliver the program as intended. Activities refer to the actual program components that are expected to be related to a desired outcome. Outputs refer to the immediate products or results of activities that can be observed as evidence that the activity was actually completed. Outcomes refer to the desired benefits of the program that are expected to occur as a consequence of program activities. The authors' logic model development was guided by four questions:

1. What are the essential desired outcomes of the ASCA National Model?
2. What are the essential activities of the ASCA National Model and how do these activities relate to its outputs?
3. What are the essential outputs of the ASCA National Model and how do these outputs relate to its desired outcomes?
4. What are the essential inputs of the ASCA National Model and how do these inputs relate to its activities?

Methods

All analyses in this study were based on the latest edition of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012). In these analyses, every attempt was made to base inferences on the actual language of the model. In some instances (for example, when it was unclear which outputs were expected to be related to a given activity) the professional literature about the ASCA National Model was consulted.

Because the authors intended to develop a logic model from an existing program blueprint (rather than designing a new program), they began, according to recommended procedures (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004), by first identifying outcomes and then working backward to identify activities, then outputs associated with activities and finally, inputs.

Identification of Outcomes

The authors independently reviewed the ASCA National Model (2012) and identified all elements in the model. The two authors' lists of elements (e.g., vision statement, annual agreement with school leaders, indirect service delivery and curriculum results reports) were merged to create a common list of elements. The authors then independently created a series of *if, then* statements for each element of the model that traced the logical connections explicitly stated in the model (or in rare instances, stated in the professional literature about the model) between the element and a program outcome. In this way, both the desired outcomes of the ASCA National Model and the desired logical linkages between elements and outcomes were identified.

During this process, some ASCA National Model elements were included in the same logic sequence because they were causally related to each other. For example, both the vision statement and the mission

statement were included in the same logic sequence because a strong vision statement was described as a necessary prerequisite for the development of a strong mission statement. Some ASCA National Model elements also were included in more than one logical sequence when it was clear that two different outcomes were intended to occur related to the same element. For example, it was evident that closing-the-gap reports were intended to result in intervention improvements, leading to better student outcomes and also to apprising key stakeholders of school counseling program results, in order to increase support and resources for the program.

Identification of Activities

Frechtling (2007) noted that the choice of the right amount of complexity in portraying the activities in a logic model is a critically important factor in a model's utility. If activities are portrayed in their most differentiated form, the model can be too complex to be useful. If activities are portrayed in their most compact form, the model can lack enough detail to guide evaluation. Therefore, in the present study, the authors decided to construct several different logic models with different sets of activities that ranged from including all the previously identified ASCA National Model elements as activities to including only the four sections of the ASCA National Model (i.e., foundation, management system, delivery system and accountability system) as activities. As neither of the two extreme options proved to be feasible, the authors began clustering ASCA National Model elements and developed six activities, each of which represented a cluster of program elements.

Identification of Outputs Related to Activities

Outputs are the observable immediate products or deliverables of the logic model's inputs and activities (Frechtling, 2007). After the authors identified an appropriate level for representing model activities, they generated the same level of program outputs. Reexamining the logic sequences, clustering products of identified activities and then creating general output categories from the clustered products accomplished this task. For example, the activity known as direct services contained several ASCA National Model products, such as the curriculum results report, the small-group results report and the closing-the-gap results report (among others), and the resulting output was finally categorized as student change. Ultimately, seven logic model outputs were identified through this process to help describe the outputs created by ASCA National Model activities.

Identifying the Connections Between Outputs and Outcomes

Creating connections between model outputs and outcomes was accomplished by linking the original logic sequences to determine how the ASCA National Model would conceive of outputs as being linked to outcomes. Returning to the above example, the output known as student change, which included such products as results reports, was connected to the outcome known as student achievement and gap reduction in several logic sequences. At the conclusion of this process, each output had straightforward links to one or multiple proposed model outcomes. Not only was this process useful in identifying links between outputs and outcomes, but it also functioned as an opportunity to test the output categories for conceptual clarity.

Identification of Inputs and Connections Between Inputs and Activities

The authors reviewed the ASCA National Model to determine which inputs were necessary to include in the logic model. They identified two essential types of inputs: foundational elements (conceptual underpinnings described in the foundation section of the ASCA National Model) and program resources (described throughout the ASCA National Model). The authors determined that these two types of inputs were necessary for the effective operation of all six activities.

Identifying Other Connections Within the Logic Model

After the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and the connections between these levels were mapped, the authors again reviewed the logic sequences and the ASCA National Model to determine if any additional

linkages needed to be included in the logic model (see Frechtling, 2007). They evaluated the need for within-level linkages (e.g., between two activities) and feedback loops (i.e., where a subsequent component influences the nature of preceding components). The authors determined that two within-level and one recursive linkage were needed.

Results

Outcomes

A total of 65 logic sequences were identified for the ASCA National Model sections: foundation ($n = 7$), management system ($n = 30$), delivery system ($n = 7$) and accountability system ($n = 21$). Table 1 contains sample logic sequences.

Table 1

Examples of Logic Sequences Relating ASCA National Model Elements to Outcomes

National Model Section	Logic Sequence
Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. If counselors go through the process of creating a set of shared beliefs, then they will establish a level of mutual understanding. b. If counselors establish a level of mutual understanding, then they will be more successful in developing a shared vision for the program. c. If counselors develop a shared vision for the program, then they can develop an effective vision statement. d. If counselors create a vision statement, then they will have the clarity of purpose that is needed to develop a mission statement. e. If counselors create a mission statement, then the program will be more focused. f. If the program is better focused, counselors will create a set of program goals, which will enable counselors to specify how the attainment of the goals should be measured. g. If counselors specify how the attainment of goals should be measured, then effective program evaluation will be conducted. h. If effective program evaluation is conducted, then the program will be continuously improved. i. If the program will be continuously improved, then improved student achievement will result.
Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. If school counselors create annual agreements with the leader in charge of the school, then the goals and activities of the counseling program will be more aligned with the goals of the school. b. If the goals and activities of the counseling program are more aligned with the goals of the school, then school leaders will recognize the value of the school counseling program. c. If school leaders recognize the value of the school counseling program, then they will commit resources to support the program.
Delivery System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. If school counselors engage in indirect services (e.g., consultation and advocacy), then school policies and processes will improve. b. If school policies and processes improve, then teachers will develop more competency, and systemic change and school improvement will occur.
Accountability System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. If counselors complete curriculum results reports, then they will have the information they need to demonstrate the effectiveness of developmental and preventative curricular activities. b. If counselors have the information they need to demonstrate the effectiveness of developmental and preventative curricular activities, then they can communicate their impact to school leaders. c. If school leaders are aware of the impact of developmental and preventative curricular activities, then they will recognize their value. d. If school leaders recognize the value of developmental and preventative curricular activities, then they will commit resources to support them.

Forty of these logic sequences terminated with an outcome related to increased student achievement or (relatedly) to a reduction in the achievement gap. Twenty-two sequences terminated with an outcome related to an increase in program resources. Only three sequences terminated with an outcome related to systemic change in the school. From this analysis, the authors concluded that the primary desired outcomes of the ASCA National Model are increased student achievement/gap reduction and increased school counseling program resources. They also concluded that systemic change and school improvement is another desired outcome of the ASCA National Model.

Activities

Based on a clustering of ASCA National Model elements identified previously, six activities were developed for the logic model. These activities included the following: direct services, indirect services, school counselor personnel evaluation, program management processes, program evaluation processes and program advocacy processes. Each of these activities represents a cluster of elements within the ASCA National Model. For example, the activity known as direct services includes the school counseling core curriculum, individual student planning and responsive services. Consequently, the direct services activity represents the spectrum of services that would be delivered to students in an ASCA National Model school counseling program.

Activities Related to Outputs

Based on the clustering of the ASCA National Model products or deliverables around the related logic model activities, seven outputs were identified. These outputs included the following: student change, parent involvement, teacher competence, school policies and processes, school counselor competence, school counseling program improvements, and administrator support. The outputs represent all of the ASCA National Model products generated by model activities and help to collect evidence and determine to what degree an activity was successfully accomplished. In essence, for evaluation purposes, these outputs represent the intermediate outcomes (Dimmitt et al., 2007) of an ASCA National Model program. Activities should result in measurable changes in outputs, which in turn should result in measurable changes in outcomes. For example, the output known as student change reflects student changes such as increased academic motivation, increased problem-solving skills, enhanced emotional regulation and better interpersonal problem-solving skills; these changes lead to the longer-term outcome of student achievement and gap reduction.

Connections Between Outputs and Outcomes

Connecting the seven ASCA National Model outputs to its outcomes strengthens the logic model by identifying the hypothesized relationships between the more immediate changes that result from school counseling program activities (i.e., outputs) and the more distal changes that result from the operation of the program (i.e., outcomes). As described earlier, two primary outcomes (student achievement and gap reduction and increased program resources) and one secondary outcome (systemic change and school improvement) were identified within the ASCA National Model. Three of the seven outputs (student change, parent involvement and administrator support) were connected to only one outcome. Three other outputs (teacher competence, school policies and processes, and school counselor competence) were connected to two outcomes. One output (administrator support) was connected to all three outcomes. Interpreting these linkages is useful in understanding the implicit theory of change of the ASCA National Model and consequently in designing appropriate evaluation studies. The authors' logic model, for example, indicates that student changes (related to both direct and indirect services of an ASCA National Model program) are expected to result in measurable increases in student achievement and a reduction in the achievement gap.

It also is helpful to scan backward in the logic model to identify how changes in outcomes are expected to occur. For example, student achievement and gap reduction is linked to six model outputs (student change, parent involvement, teacher competence, school policies and processes, school counselor competence, and

school counseling program improvements). Student achievement and gap reduction is multiply determined and is the major focus of the ASCA National Model. Increased program resources are connected to three model outputs (school counselor competence, school counseling program improvements and administrator support). Systemic change and school improvement also can be connected to three outputs (teacher competence, school policies and processes, and school counseling program improvements).

Inputs and Connections Between Inputs and Activities

Based on an analysis of the ASCA National Model, two inputs were identified for inclusion in the logic model: foundational elements (which include the elements in the ASCA National Model's foundation section considered important for program planning and operation) and program resources (which include elements essential for effective program implementation such as counselor caseload, counselor expertise, counselor professional development support, counselor time-use and program budget). Both of these inputs were identified as being important in the delivery of all six activities.

Additional Connections Within the Logic Model

Based on a final review of the logical sequences and another review of the ASCA National Model, three additional linkages were added to the authors' logic model. The first linkage was a unidirectional arrow leading from management processes to program evaluation in the activities column. This arrow was intended to represent the tight connection between management processes and evaluation activities that is evident in the ASCA National Model. Relatedly, a unidirectional arrow leading from the school counseling program evaluation activity to the program advocacy activity was added. This arrow was intended to represent the many instances of the ASCA National Model suggesting that program evaluation activities should be used to generate essential information for program advocacy. The final additional link was a recursive arrow leading from the increased program resources outcome to the program resources input. This linkage was intended to represent the ASCA National Model's concept that investment of additional resources resulting from successful implementation and operation of an ASCA National Model program will result in even higher levels of program effectiveness and eventually even better outcomes.

The Logic Model

Figure 1 contains the final logic model for the ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs. Logic models portray the implicit theory of change underlying a program and consequently facilitate the evaluation of the program (Frechtling, 2007). Overall, the theory of change for an ASCA national program could be described as follows: If school counselors use the foundational elements of the ASCA National Model and have sufficient program resources, they will be able to develop and implement a comprehensive program characterized by activities related to direct services, indirect services, school counselor personnel evaluation, management processes, program evaluation and (relatedly) program advocacy. If these activities are put in place, several outputs will be observed, including the following: student changes in academic behavior, increased parent involvement, increases in teacher competence in working with students, better school policies and processes, increased competence of the school counselors themselves, demonstrable improvements in the school counseling program, and increased administrator support for the school counseling program. If these outputs occur, then the following outcomes should result: increased student achievement and a related reduction in the achievement gap, notable systemic improvement in the school in which the program is being implemented, and increased program support and resources. If these additional resources are reinvested in the school counseling program, the effectiveness of the program will increase.

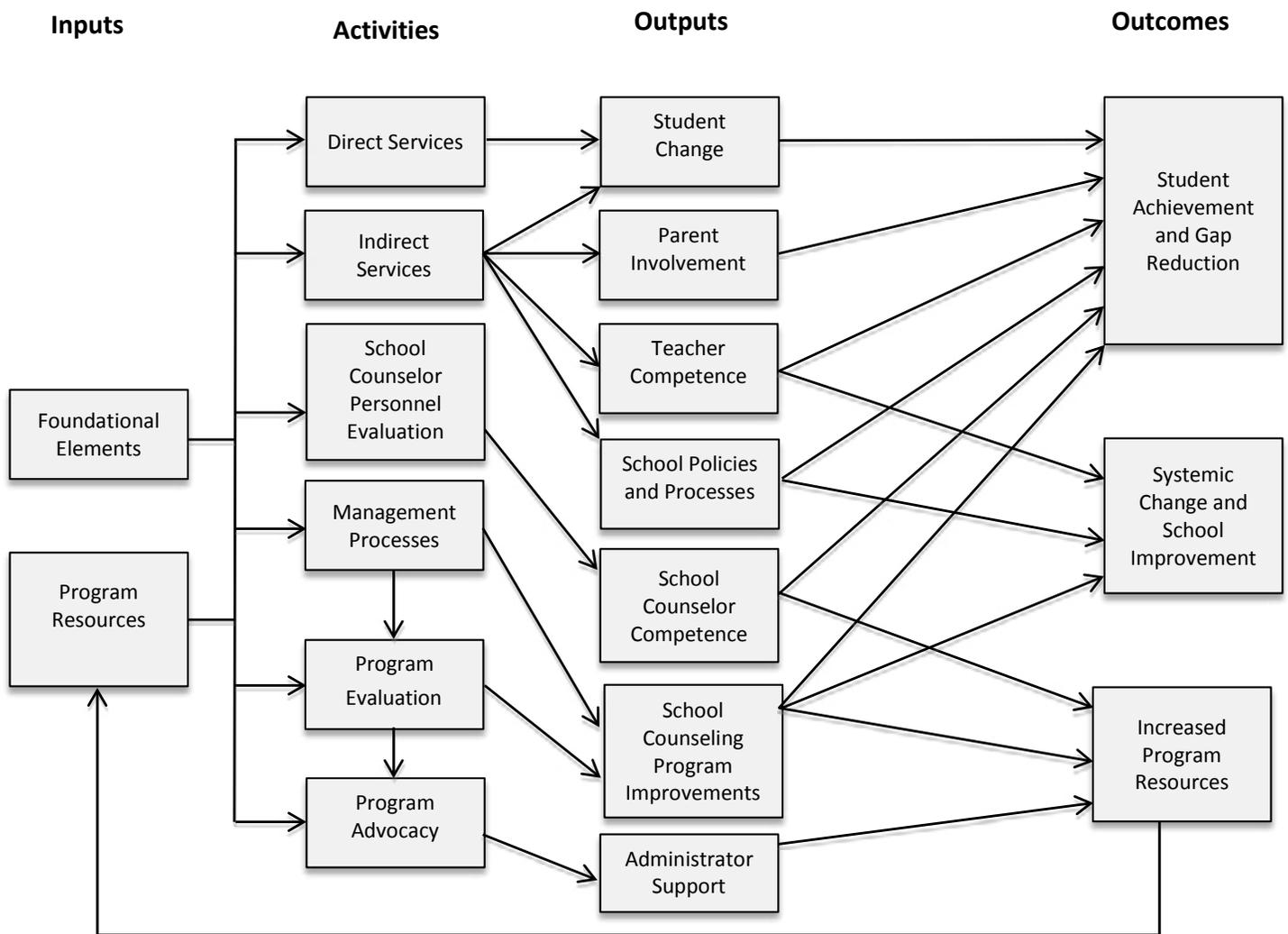


Figure 1. *Logic Model for ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs*

Discussion

Logic models can be used for a number of purposes including the following: enhancing communication among program team members, managing the program, documenting how the program is intended to operate and developing an approach to evaluation and related evaluation questions (Frechtling, 2007). The present study was conducted in order to develop a logic model for ASCA National Model programs so that these programs could be more readily evaluated, and based on the results of these evaluations, the ASCA National Model could then be improved.

Evaluations can focus on the question of whether or not a program or components of a program actually result in intended changes. At the most global level, an evaluation can focus on discovering the extent to which the program as a whole achieves its desired outcomes. At a more detailed level, an evaluation can focus on discovering the extent to which the components (i.e., activities) of the program achieve their desired outputs (with the assumption that achievement of the outputs is a necessary precursor to achievement of the outcomes).

In both types of evaluations, it is important to use a design that allows some form of comparison. In the simplest case, it would be possible to compare outputs and outcomes before and after implementation of the

ASCA National Model. In more complex cases, it would be possible to compare outputs and outcomes of programs that have implemented the ASCA National Model with programs that have not. In these cases, it is essential to control for the confounding effects of extraneous variables (e.g., the affluence of students in the school) by the use of matching or covariates. If the level of implementation of the ASCA National Model program as a whole can be measured, it is even possible to use multivariate correlation approaches to examine whether the level of implementation of the program is related to desired outcomes while simultaneously controlling statistically for potential confounding variables. These same correlational procedures can be used to examine the relationships between the more discrete activities of the program and their corresponding outputs.

At the most global level, it is important to evaluate the extent to which the implementation of the ASCA National Model results in the following: increases in student achievement (and associated reductions in the achievement gap), measurable systemic change and school improvements, and increases in resources for the school counseling program. At present, there is some evidence that implementation of the ASCA National Model is related to achievement gains (Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevens, 2012). No evaluations to date have examined whether ASCA National Model implementation results in systemic change and school improvement or in an increase in program resources.

It also is important to evaluate the extent to which specific program activities achieve their desired outputs. Table 2 contains a list of sample evaluation questions for each activity. Within these questions, evaluation is focused on whether or not components of the program result in overall benefits. No evaluation study to date has evaluated the impact of ASCA National Model implementation on these factors.

Table 2

Sample Evaluation Questions for ASCA National Model Activities

Activities	Evaluation Questions
Direct Services	Does organizing and delivering school counseling direct services in accordance with ASCA National Model principles result in an increase in important aspects of students' school behavior that are related to academic achievement?
Indirect Services	Does organizing and delivering school counseling indirect services in accordance with ASCA National Model principles result in an increase in parent involvement? Does organizing and delivering school counseling indirect services in accordance with ASCA National Model principles result in an increase in teachers' abilities to work effectively with students? Does organizing and delivering school counseling indirect services in accordance with ASCA National Model principles result in improvements in school policies and procedures that support student achievement?
School Counselor Personnel Evaluation	Does the implementation of personnel and processes recommended by the ASCA National Model result in increases in the professional competence of school counselors?
Management Processes	Does the implementation of the management processes recommended by the ASCA National Model result in demonstrable improvements in the school counseling program?
Program Evaluation	Does the implementation of program evaluation processes recommended by the ASCA National Model result in demonstrable improvements in the school counseling program?
Program Advocacy	Does the implementation of the program advocacy practices recommended by the ASCA National Model result in increases in administrator support for the program?

In addition to examining program-related change, it is important to evaluate whether a basic assumption of the ASCA National Model bears out in reality. The major assumption is that school counselors who use the foundational elements of the ASCA National Model (e.g., vision statement, mission statement) and have access to typical levels of program resources can develop and implement all the activities associated with an ASCA National Model program (e.g., direct services, indirect services, school counselor personnel evaluation, management processes, program evaluation and program advocacy). Qualitative evaluations of the relationships between inputs and quality of the activities are necessary to determine what levels of inputs are necessary for full implementation. While full evaluation studies of this type have yet to be undertaken, Martin and Carey (2012) have recently reported the results of a two-state qualitative comparison of how statewide capacity-building activities to promote school counselors' competence in evaluation were used to promote the widespread implementation of ASCA National Model school counseling programs. More studies of this type that focus on the relationships between a broader range of program inputs and school counselors' ability to fully implement ASCA National Model program activities are needed.

Limitations and Future Directions

Constructing a logic model retrospectively is inherently challenging and complex. This is especially true when the program for which the logic model is being created was not initially developed with reference to an explicit, coherent theory of action. In the present study, the authors approached the work systematically and are confident that others following similar procedures would generate similar results. With that said, a limitation of this work is that the logic model was created based on the authors' analyses of the written description of the ASCA National Model (2012) and literature surrounding the ASCA National Model. Engaging individuals who were involved in the development and implementation of the ASCA National Model in dialogue might have resulted in a richer logic model with even more utility in directing evaluation of the ASCA National Model. As a follow-up to the present study, the authors intend to continue this inquiry by asking key individuals involved with the ASCA National Model to evaluate the present logic model and to suggest revisions and extensions. Even given this limitation, the current study has potential immediate implications for improving practice that go beyond its role in providing focus and direction for ASCA National Model evaluation.

A potentially fertile testing ground for the implementation of the logic model is present within the RAMP Award process. As aforementioned, RAMP awards are given to exemplary schools that have successfully implemented the ASCA National Model. Currently, schools provide evidence (data) and create narratives regarding how they have successfully met RAMP criteria. Twelve independent rubrics are scored and totaled to determine whether a school receives a RAMP Award. At least two contributions of the logic model for improving the RAMP process seem feasible. First, practitioners can use the logic model to help construct narratives that better articulate how ASCA National Model activities/outputs relate to model outcomes. Second, the logic model may also help improve the RAMP process by highlighting clearer links between activities, outputs and outcomes. In future revisions of the RAMP process, more attention could be paid to the documentation of benefits achieved by the program in terms of both outputs (i.e., the immediate measurable positive consequences of program activities) and outcomes (i.e., the longer-term positive consequences of program operation). In this vein, the authors hope that the logic model developed in this study will help to improve the RAMP process for both practitioners and RAMP evaluators.

Retrospective logic models map a program as it is. In that sense, they are very useful in directing the evaluation of existing programs. Prospective logic models are used to design new programs. Using logic models in program design (or redesign) has some distinct advantages. "Logic models help identify the factors that will impact your program and enable you to anticipate the data and resources you will need to achieve success"

(W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 65). When programs are planned with the use of a logic model, greater opportunities exist to explore foundational theories of change, to explore issues or problems addressed by the program, to surface community needs and assets related to the program, to consider desired program results, to identify influential program factors (e.g., barriers or supports), to consider program strategies (e.g., best practices), and to elucidate program assumptions (e.g., the beliefs behind *how* and *why* the strategies will work; W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). The authors hope that logic modeling will be incorporated prospectively into the next revision process of the ASCA National Model. Basing future editions of the ASCA National Model on a logic model that comprehensively describes its theory of action should result in a more elegant ASCA National Model with a clearer articulation between its components and its desired results. Such a model would be easier to articulate, implement and evaluate. The authors hope that the development of a retrospective logic model in the present study will facilitate the prospective use of a logic model in subsequent ASCA National Model revisions. The present logic model provides a map of the current state of the ASCA National Model. It is a good starting point for reconsidering such questions as how the model should operate, whether the outcomes are the right outcomes, whether the activities are sufficient and comprehensive enough to lead to the desired outcomes, and whether the available program resources are sufficient to support implementation of program activities.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The authors reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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Counseling Self-Efficacy, Quality of Services and Knowledge of Evidence-Based Practices in School Mental Health



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 467–480
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/bes.4.5.467

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Counseling self-efficacy (CSE), defined as one's beliefs about his or her ability to effectively counsel a client, is an important precursor of effective clinical practice. While research has explored the association of CSE with variables such as counselor training, aptitude and level of experience, little attention has been paid to CSE among school mental health (SMH) practitioners. This study examined the influence of quality training (involving quality assessment and improvement, modular evidence-based practices, and family engagement/empowerment) versus peer support and supervision on CSE in SMH practitioners, and the relationship between CSE and practice-related variables. ANCOVA indicated similar mean CSE changes for counselors receiving the quality training versus peer support. Regression analyses indicated that regardless of condition, postintervention CSE scores significantly predicted quality of practice, knowledge of evidence-based practices (EBP) and use of EBP specific to treating depression. Results emphasize the importance of CSE in effective practice and the need to consider mechanisms to enhance CSE among SMH clinicians.

Keywords: self-efficacy, school mental health, evidence-based practices, counselor training, depression

There are major gaps between the mental health needs of children and adolescents and the availability of effective services to meet such needs (Burns et al., 1995; Kataoka, Zhang, & Wells, 2002). This recognition is fueling efforts to improve mental health services for youth in schools (Mellin, 2009; Stephan, Weist, Kataoka, Adelsheim, & Mills, 2007). At least 20% of all youth have significant mental health needs, with roughly 5% experiencing substantial functional impairment (Leaf, Schultz, Kiser, & Pruitt, 2003). Further, less than one third of children with such mental health needs receive any services at all.

The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003) documented the position of schools as a point of contact and universal natural setting for youth and families, recognizing schools as a key factor in the transformation of child and adolescent mental health services (Stephan et al., 2007). In the past 2 decades, there has been a significant push for full-service schools that expand beyond a sole focus on education, and employ community mental health practitioners to respond to the emotional and behavioral needs of students (Conwill, 2003; Dryfoos, 1993; Kronick, 2000). The education sector is the most common provider of mental health services for children and adolescents (Farmer, Burns, Phillips, Angold, & Costello, 2003), with 70%–80% of

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youth who receive any mental health services obtaining them at school (Burns et al., 1995; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000). Therefore, attention must be paid to the quantity, quality and effectiveness of school mental health (SMH) services.

School Mental Health

In recent years, SMH programs, supported by both school staff (e.g., school psychologists, social workers, counselors) and school-based community mental health clinicians, have emerged as a promising approach to the provision of mental health services for students and families (Weist, Evans, & Lever, 2003). The growth of these programs has facilitated investigation of what constitutes high-quality SMH service provision (Nabors, Reynolds, & Weist, 2000; Weist et al., 2005). This work has been supported and furthered by the Center for School Mental Health, a federally funded technical assistance and training program to advance SMH programs within the United States. In collaboration with other SMH centers (e.g., UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools) and interdisciplinary networks focused on school health, consensus was reached to develop a guiding framework defining best practices in SMH (Weist et al., 2005). These principles call for appropriate service provision for children and families, implementation of interventions to meet school and student needs, and coordination of mental health programs in the school with related community resources, among other things. For further explication of the framework and its development, see Weist et al. (2005).

Simultaneously, research developments through the Center for School Mental Health facilitated implementation of modular evidence-based practices (EBP; see Chorpita, Becker & Daleiden, 2007; Chorpita & Daleiden, 2009). A modular approach for intervention involves training clinicians in core, effective strategies for disorders frequently encountered in children (e.g., attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder [ADHD], anxiety, depression, disruptive behavior disorders [DBD]). This approach enables individualized, flexible implementation of evidence-based strategies without the constraints of a manualized approach (Curry & Reinecke, 2003). The third guiding component to enhance quality in SMH practices is development of strategies to effectively engage and empower families (see Hoagwood, 2005).

Despite the development of such a framework, SMH clinicians often struggle to implement high-quality, evidence-based services (Evans et al., 2003; Evans & Weist, 2004). These clinicians are constrained by a lack of sufficient time, training in EBP, appropriate supervision, and internal and external resources (Shernoff, Kratchowill & Stoiber, 2003). For instance, a survey by Walrath et al. (2004) of Baltimore SMH clinicians suggested that the ratio of clinicians to students was 1:250, and in order to meet the mental health needs of students, clinicians would have to increase clinical hours by 79 per week to remediate student difficulties. Additionally, the school environment is often characterized as chaotic, hectic and crisis-driven (Langley, Nadeem, Kataoka, Stein, & Jaycox, 2010), with SMH clinicians citing difficulties implementing EBP given the schedules of students. As a result of the challenges limiting use of EBP in daily SMH practice, researchers are now evaluating the influences on successful delivery of EBP in schools, including the personal qualities of SMH professionals (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, skills, training; Berger, 2013), as well as environmental factors (e.g., school administrative support, access to community resources, sufficient space for practice; Powers, Edwards, Blackman & Wegmann, 2013) that may predict high-quality services (see Weist et al., 2014).

Previous work examining factors related to the provision of evidence-based SMH services by SMH clinicians suggested that the highest-rated facilitators of effective SMH practice were personal characteristics (e.g., desire to deliver mental health services), attitudes and openness toward use of EBP, and adequate training (Beidas et al., 2012; Langley et al., 2010). Alternatively, SMH clinicians reported a number of administrative, school site and personal barriers as significant obstacles to appropriate service delivery; such barriers include

lack of sufficient training, overwhelming caseload, job burnout and personal mental health difficulties (Langley et al., 2010; Suldo, Friedrich, & Michalowski, 2010).

While researchers have evaluated the influence of SMH provider personal characteristics in relation to the delivery of high-quality SMH services, little attention has been paid to the importance of counseling self-efficacy (CSE). CSE is widely accepted as an important precursor to competent clinical practice (Kozina, Grabovari, De Stefano, & Drapeau, 2010). Further, building CSE is considered an important strategy in active learning when providing training in evidence-based therapies (Beidas & Kendall, 2010), and CSE in EBP is believed to be essential to implementation (Aarons, 2005). However, researchers have yet to systematically include measures of CSE in studies of EBP utilization by SMH providers.

Self-Efficacy

Social-cognitive theory and its central construct, self-efficacy, have received much attention in the psychological literature, with more than 10,000 studies including these as central variables in the past 25 years (Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, & Rich, 2007). Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's beliefs about his or her ability to achieve desired levels of performance (Bandura, 1994), and it plays a key role in the initiation and maintenance of human behavior (Iannelli, 2000). Given the influence of self-efficacy expectancies on performance, researchers have evaluated how self-efficacy impacts a variety of action-related domains, including career selection (e.g., Branch & Lichtenberg, 1987; Zeldin, Britner, & Pajares, 2008), health-behavior change (e.g., Ramo, Prochaska, & Myers, 2010; Sharpe et al., 2008) and work-related performance (e.g., Judge et al., 2007; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Specific to the mental health field, previous investigations have focused on how self-efficacy is related to counseling performance.

Counseling Self-Efficacy

The construct of CSE is defined as an individual's beliefs about his or her ability to effectively counsel a client in the near future (Larson & Daniels, 1998). Studies of the structure and influence of CSE among a variety of mental health professionals, including counseling trainees, master's-level counselors, psychologists, school counselors and students from related professions (e.g., clergy, medicine) have yielded mixed findings. Social desirability, counselor personality, aptitude, achievement (Larson et al., 1992) and counselor age (Watson, 2012) have shown small to moderate associations with CSE. CSE also is related to external factors, including the perceived and objective work environment, supervisor characteristics, and level or quality of supervision (Larson & Daniels, 1998).

However, the relationship of CSE with level of training is unclear. For the most part, CSE is stronger for individuals with at least some counseling experience than for those with none (Melchert, Hays, Wiljanen, & Kolocek, 1996; Tang et al., 2004). While the amount of training and education obtained have been reported as statistically significant predictors of degree of CSE (Larson & Daniels, 1998; Melchert et al., 1996), more recent work has not supported the existence of such predictive relationships (Tang et al., 2004). It also has been suggested that once a counselor has obtained advanced graduate training beyond the master's level, the influence of experience on CSE becomes rather minimal (Larson, Cardwell, & Majors, 1996; Melchert et al., 1996; Sutton & Fall, 1995).

Some work has been done to evaluate interventions aimed at enhancing CSE by utilizing the four primary sources of self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1977; i.e., mastery, modeling, social persuasion, affective arousal). In two studies involving undergraduate recreation students, Munson, Zoerink & Stadulis (1986) found that modeling with role-play and visual imagery served to enhance CSE greater than a wait-list control group.

Larson et al. (1999) attempted to extend these findings utilizing a sample of practicum counseling trainees, and found that self-evaluation of success in the session moderated the level of CSE postintervention (Larson et al., 1999), with perception of success significantly impacting the potency of the role-play scenarios. The same effect was not found for individuals in the videotape condition.

In addition to impacting clinician performance, CSE has been reported to indirectly impact positive client outcome (Urbani et al., 2002); for example, CSE has been associated with more positive outcomes for clients, more positive self-evaluations and fewer anxieties regarding counseling performance (Larson & Daniels, 1998). Thus, increasing CSE, which decreases clinicians' anxiety, is important for client outcomes, as anxiety is reported to decrease level of clinical judgment and performance (Urbani et al., 2002). While there is some evidence that CSE is influential for client outcomes, minimal work has been done to evaluate this relationship.

CSE has been evaluated in a variety of samples; however, little work has been done to evaluate CSE of SMH practitioners and the factors that play into its development. Additionally, although some investigation has been conducted on factors that impact SMH practitioners' abilities and performance, CSE is an element that seldom has been studied.

The current study aimed to examine the influence of a quality assessment and improvement (QAI) intervention on CSE in SMH practitioners, as well as the importance of CSE in regard to practice-related domains. The primary question of interest was, Does an intervention focused on QAI (target) result in higher levels of CSE than a comparison condition involving a focus on professional wellness (W) and supervision (control)? We investigated the influence of differential quality training and supervision on one's level of CSE by comparing postintervention CSE scores between each condition after evaluating preintervention equivalency of CSE levels. Thus, we hypothesized that long-term exposure to the QAI intervention, family engagement/empowerment and modular EBP would result in significantly higher reports of CSE from those exposed to the QAI intervention than those exposed to the comparison intervention. Based on previous research, it is possible that specific counselor characteristics (e.g., age, experience) would predict CSE, such that individuals who are older and have more experience counseling children and adolescents would have higher CSE (Melchert et al., 1996; Tang et al., 2004; Watson, 2012). Thus, when evaluating training effects, these variables were included as covariates in the analysis of the relation between CSE and training.

Secondarily, this study aimed to evaluate the relation of professional experiences to CSE following exposure to the intervention. For this aim, the research question was, Does postintervention level of CSE predict quality of self-reported SMH practice, as well as knowledge and use of EBP? We hypothesized that level of CSE would predict quality of SMH practice, as well as attitude toward, knowledge and use of EBP regardless of intervention condition.

Method

This article stems from a larger previous evaluation of a framework to enhance the quality of SMH (Weist et al., 2009), funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (#1R01MH71015; 2003-2007; M. Weist, PI). As a part of a 12-year research program on quality and EBP in SMH, researchers conducted a two-year, multisite (from community agencies in Delaware, Maryland, Texas) randomized controlled trial of a framework for high-quality and effective practice in SMH (EBP, family engagement/empowerment and systematic QAI) as compared to an enhanced treatment as usual condition (focused on personal and school staff wellness). Only the methods pertaining to the aims of the current study have been included here (see Stephan et al., 2012; Weist et al., 2009 for more comprehensive descriptions).

Participants

A sample of 72 SMH clinicians (i.e., clinicians employed by community mental health centers to provide clinical services within the school system) from the three SMH sites participated for the duration of the study (2004–2006), and provided complete data for all study measures via self-report. All clinicians were employed by community-based agencies with an established history of providing SMH prevention and intervention services to elementary, middle and high school students in both general and special education programs.

A total of 91 clinicians participated over the course of the study, with a sample size of 64 in Year 1 and 66 in Year 2, with 27 clinicians involved only in Year 2. Out of the Year 1 sample (35 QAI and 29 W), 24 participants did not continue into Year 2 (13 QAI and 11 W). Dropout showed no association with nonparticipation and did not differ between conditions (37% QAI versus 38% comparison dropout rate). Investigations in this particular study focused on individuals who had completed at least one year of the study and had submitted pre- and postintervention measures. The 72 participants were predominantly female (61 women, 11 men) and were 36 years old on average ($SD = 11.03$). In terms of race and ethnicity, participants identified as Caucasian (55%), African American (26%), Hispanic (18%) and Other (1%). Participants reported the following educational levels: graduate degree (83%), some graduate coursework (13%), bachelor's degree (3%), and some college (1%). In terms of experience, clinicians had roughly 6 years of prior experience and had worked for their current agency for 3 years on average. The obtained sample is reflective of SMH practitioners throughout the United States (Lewis, Truscott, & Volker, 2008).

Measures

Counseling self-efficacy. Participants' CSE was measured using the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (Sutton & Fall, 1995). The measure was designed to be used with school counselors, and was created using a sample of public school counselors in Maine. Sutton and Fall modified a teacher efficacy scale (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), resulting in a 33-item measure that reflected CSE and outcome expectancies. Results of a principal-component factor analysis demonstrated initial construct validity, indicating a three-factor structure, with the internal consistency of these three factors reported as adequate (.67–.75). However, the structure of the measure has received criticism, with some researchers arguing that the third factor does not measure outcome expectancies as defined by social-cognitive theory (Larson & Daniels, 1998). Thus, we made a decision to use the entire 33-item scale as a measure of overall CSE. Respondents were asked to rate each item using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree). We made slight language modifications to make the scale more applicable to the work of this sample (Weist et al., 2009); for instance, *guidance program* became *counseling program*. CSE was measured in both conditions at the beginning and end of Years 1 and 2 of the intervention program.

Quality of school mental health services. The School Mental Health Quality Assessment Questionnaire (SMHQAQ) is a 40-item research-based measure developed by the investigators of the larger study to assess 10 principles for best practice in SMH (Weist et al., 2005; Weist et al., 2006), including the following: "Programs are implemented to address needs and strengthen assets for students, families, schools, and communities" and "Students, families, teachers and other important groups are actively involved in the program's development, oversight, evaluation, and continuous improvement."

At the end of Year 2, clinicians rated the degree to which each principle was present in their own practice on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from *not at all in place* to *fully in place*. Given that results from a principle components analysis indicated that all 10 principles weighed heavily on a single strong component, analyses focused primarily on total scores of the SMHQAQ. Aside from factor analytic results, validity estimates are unavailable. Internal consistency as measured by coefficient alpha was very strong (.95).

Knowledge and use of evidence-based practices. The Practice Elements Checklist (PEC) is based on the Hawaii Department of Health's comprehensive summary of top modular EBP elements (Chorpita & Daleiden, 2007). Principal investigators of the larger study created the PEC in consultation with Bruce Chorpita of the University of California, Los Angeles, an expert in mental health technologies for children and adolescents. The PEC asks clinicians to provide ratings of the eight skills found most commonly across effective treatments for four disorder areas (ADHD, DBD, depression and anxiety). Respondents used a 6-point Likert scale to rate both current knowledge of the practice element (1= none and 6 = significant), as well as frequency of use of the element in their own practice, and frequency with which the clinician treats children whose primary presenting issue falls within one of the four disorder areas (1 = never, 6 = frequently).

In addition to total knowledge and total frequency subscales (scores ranging from 4–24), research staff calculated four knowledge and four frequency subscale scores (one for each disorder area) by averaging responses across practice elements for each disorder area (scores ranging from 1–6). Clinicians also obtained total PEC score by adding all subscale scores, resulting in a total score ranging from 16–92. Although this approach resulted in each item being counted twice, it also determined how total knowledge and skill usage are related to CSE, as well as skills in specific disorder areas. While internal consistencies were found to be excellent for each of the subscales, ranging from .84–.92, validity of the measure has yet to be evaluated. Clinicians completed the PEC at end of Year 2.

Study Design

SMH clinicians were recruited from their community agencies approximately 1 month prior to the initial staff training. After providing informed consent, clinicians completed a set of questionnaires, which included demographic information, level of current training and CSE, and were randomly assigned to the QAI intervention or the W intervention. Four training events were provided for participants in both conditions (at the beginning and end of both Years 1 and 2). During the four training events, individuals in the QAI condition received training in the three elements reviewed previously. For individuals involved in the W (i.e., comparison) condition, training events focused on general staff wellness, including stress management, coping strategies, relaxation techniques, exercise, nutrition and burnout prevention.

At each site, senior clinicians (i.e., licensed mental health professionals with a minimum of a master's degree and 3 years experience in SMH) were chosen to serve as project supervisors for the condition to which they were assigned. These clinicians were not considered participants, and maintained their positions for the duration of the study. Over the course of the project, each research supervisor dedicated one day per week to the study, and was assigned a group of roughly 10 clinicians to supervise. Within the QAI condition, supervisors held weekly group meetings with small groups of five clinicians to review QAI processes and activities in their schools, as well as strategies for using the evidence base; in contrast, there was no study-related school support for staff in the W condition.

Results

Preliminary Analyses and Scaling

Analyses were conducted using SPSS, version 20; tests of statistical significance were conducted with a Bonferroni correction (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003), resulting in the use of an alpha of .0045, two-tailed. To facilitate comparisons between variables, staff utilized a scaling method known as Percentage of Maximum Possible (POMP) scores, developed by Cohen, Cohen, Aiken, & West (1999). Using this method, raw scores are transformed so that they range from zero to 100%. This type of scoring makes no assumptions

about the shape of the distributions, in contrast to z scores, for which a normal distribution is assumed. POMP scores are an easily understood and interpreted metric and cumulatively lead to a basis for agreement on the size of material effects in the domain of interest (i.e., interventions to enhance quality of services and use of EBP; Cohen et al., 1999).

Primary Aim

Initial analyses confirmed retreatment equivalence for the two conditions, $t(72) = -.383, p = .703$. For individuals in the QAI condition, preintervention CSE scores averaged at 71.9% of maximum possible ($SD = .09$), while those in the comparison condition averaged at 71.3% of maximum possible ($SD = .08$). These scores were comparable to level of CSE observed in counseling psychologists with similar amounts of prior experience (Melchert et al., 1996).

Correlation analyses suggested that pretreatment CSE was significantly associated with age ($r = .312, p = .008$), race ($r = -.245, p = .029$), years of counseling experience ($r = .313, p = .007$) and years with the agency ($r = .232, p = .048$). Thus, these variables were included as covariates in an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) evaluating changes in CSE between the QAI and comparison conditions. Results suggested a nonsignificant difference in change in CSE from pre- to postintervention between conditions, $F(72) = .013, p = .910$. For individuals in the QAI condition, postintervention CSE scores averaged at 73.1% of maximum possible ($SD = .07$), and for individuals in the comparison condition, CSE scores averaged at 72.8% of maximum possible ($SD = .08$). Additionally, when looking across conditions, results indicated a nonsignificant difference in change in level of CSE from pre- to postintervention, $F(72) = .001, p = .971$. Across conditions, clinicians reported roughly similar levels of CSE at pre- and postintervention time points (72% vs. 73% of maximum possible); see Table 1.

Table 1

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Summary of Change in CSE

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial η^2
CSE	1	.001	.971	.000
CSE*Condition	1	.013	.910	.000
CSE*Age	1	.281	.598	.004
CSE*Race	1	1.190	.279	.018
CSE*Years of Experience	1	.032	.859	.000
CSE*Years with Agency	1	.003	.955	.000
Error	66			

Note. $N = 72$.

Secondary Aim

To investigate the influence of level of CSE on quality and practice elements in counseling, a series of individual regressions were conducted with level of postintervention CSE as the predictor variable, and indicators of attitudes toward EBP, knowledge and use of EBP, and use of quality mental health services as the outcome variables in separate analyses.

Table 2 shows that level of postintervention CSE significantly predicted the following postintervention variables: SMHQAQ quality of services ($R^2 = .328$, $F [60] = 29.34$, $p < .001$); knowledge of EBP for ADHD ($R^2 = .205$, $F [46] = 11.54$, $p = .001$), depression ($R^2 = .288$, $F [46] = 18.17$, $p < .001$), DBD ($R^2 = .236$, $F [46] = 13.92$, $p = .001$) and anxiety ($R^2 = .201$, $F [46] = 10.81$, $p = .002$); usage of EBP specific to treating depression ($R^2 = .301$, $F [46] = 19.34$, $p < .001$); and total knowledge of EBP ($R^2 = .297$, $F [44] = 18.20$, $p < .001$). Results further indicated that postintervention CSE was not a significant predictor of usage of EBP for ADHD ($R^2 = .010$, $F [45] = .457$, $p = .502$), DBD ($R^2 = .024$, $F [45] = 1.100$, $p = .300$) and anxiety ($R^2 = .075$, $F [43] = 3.487$, $p = .069$); and total usage of EBP ($R^2 = .090$, $F [43] = 4.244$, $p = .045$).

Table 2

Results of Linear Regressions Between Level of Postintervention CSE and Outcome Variables

Variables	Beta	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	p
SMH Quality	0.573	0.328	0.317	29.337	0.000
EBP ADHD – Knowledge	0.452	0.205	0.187	11.583	0.001
EBP ADHD – Usage	0.100	0.010	-0.012	0.457	0.502
EBP Depression – Knowledge	0.536	0.288	0.272	18.168	0.000
EBP Depression – Usage	0.548	0.301	0.285	19.337	0.000
EBP DBD – Knowledge	0.486	0.236	0.219	13.922	0.001
EBP DBD – Usage	0.154	0.024	0.002	1.100	0.300
EBP Anxiety – Knowledge	0.448	0.201	0.182	10.811	0.002
EBP Anxiety – Usage	0.274	0.075	0.053	3.487	0.069
EBP Total Knowledge	0.545	0.297	0.281	18.197	0.000
EBP Total Usage	0.300	0.090	0.069	4.244	0.045

Note. To control for experiment-wise error, a Bonferroni correction was used and significance was evaluated at the 0.0045 level.

Discussion

While there has been some previous examination of the association between training and CSE, results have been mixed (see Larson & Daniels, 1998), and no such evaluations have been conducted within the context of SMH services. The current study stemmed from a larger evaluation of a framework to enhance the quality of SMH, targeting quality service provision, EBP, and enhancement of family engagement and empowerment (see Weist et al., 2009).

The present study had two primary aims. The first goal was to evaluate differences in level of CSE from pre- to postintervention between two groups of SMH clinicians. We expected that those who received information, training and supervision on QAI and best practice in SMH would report higher levels of CSE postintervention than those in the W condition. The secondary aim was to evaluate whether clinician reports of postintervention CSE would serve as predictors of quality of SMH practice, as well as knowledge and use of EBP. Given the influence that clinician CSE has been found to have on practice-related variables in previous studies (see Larson & Daniels, 1998), we hypothesized that higher level of CSE would significantly predict higher quality of SMH practice, and knowledge and usage of EBP.

Controlling for age, race, years of experience and years with the agency, findings did not confirm the primary hypothesis. No statistically significant differences in clinician reports of CSE from pre- to postintervention were observed between the QAI and W conditions. Regarding the secondary aim, however, clinician postintervention level of CSE was found to serve as a significant predictor of quality of practice; total knowledge of EBP specific to treating ADHD, DBD, anxiety and depression; and usage of EBP specific to treating depression. Findings are consistent with previous literature suggesting that CSE levels influence performance in a number of practice-related domains (Larson & Daniels, 1998).

Results did not support a significant predictive relation between CSE level and usage of EBP specific to treating ADHD, DBD and anxiety. The failure to find an association may be due to evaluating level of usage of EBP across conditions due to limited power to run the analyses by condition. Results from the original study suggested that individuals in the QAI condition were more likely to use established EBP in treatment (see Weist et al., 2009). Thus, as provider characteristics including CSE (Aarons, 2005) are known to be associated with adoption of EBP, it may be that examining these associations across conditions resulted in null findings.

While current results did support the importance of high CSE regarding practice-related domains, there was no significant difference in level of CSE between those who received information, training and supervision in QAI; use of EBP; and family engagement and empowerment compared to those in the W condition. Findings from the current study contrast with other research that has documented improvements in CSE following targeted interventions. Previous targeted interventions to increase CSE have resulted in positive outcomes when using micro-skills training and mental practice (Munson, Stadulis, & Munson, 1986; Munson, Zoerink, & Stadulis, 1986), role-play and visual imagery (Larson et al., 1999), a prepracticum training course (Johnson, Baker, Kopala, Kiselica, & Thompson, 1989) and practicum experiences (Larson et al., 1993).

As a curvilinear relation is reported to exist between CSE and level of training (Larson et al., 1996; Sutton & Fall, 1995), it may be that the amount of previous training and experience of this sample of clinicians, being postlicensure, was such that the unique experiences gained through the QAI and W conditions in the current study had a minimal impact on overall CSE. Many prior studies utilized students untrained in counseling and interpersonal skills (Munson, Zoerink & Stadulis, 1986) and beginning practicum students and trainees (Easton, Martin, & Wilson, 2008; Johnson et al., 1989; Larson et al., 1992, 1993, 1999). Regarding the usefulness of a prepracticum course and practicum experiences for level of CSE, significant increases were only observed in the beginning practicum students with no significant changes seen in advanced students. Additionally, no previous studies have evaluated the success of CSE interventions with clinicians postlicensure.

It also is plausible that failure to detect an effect was due to the high preintervention levels of CSE observed across clinicians. At baseline, clinicians in the QAI condition reported CSE levels of roughly 71.9% of maximum potential, whereas those in the W condition reported CSE levels of 71.3% of maximum potential. Previous research has found high levels of CSE among practitioners with comparable amounts of previous experience, with those having 5–10 years of experience reporting mean CSE levels of 4.35 out of five points possible (Melchert et al., 1996). Thus, the average level of CSE may be accounted for by the amount of previous education and training reported by clinicians, and the observed increase of 1.5% at postintervention may be a reflection of the sample composition.

Limitations

Due to a small sample size, the power to detect changes in CSE was modest. Because of efforts to increase power by increasing the sample size, the time between reports of pre- and postintervention levels of CSE varied within the sample. Some participants completed only a year or a year and a half instead of the full 2 years.

A further limitation was reliance on self-reported information from the participating clinicians regarding their level of CSE, quality of practice, and knowledge and usage of EBP. Thus, a presentation bias may have been present in that clinicians may have reported stronger confidence in their own abilities than they felt in reality, or may have inflated responses on their knowledge and usage of EBP.

An additional limitation concerns the fact that CSE was not included as an explicit factor in training. Increasing CSE was not an explicit goal, and training and supervision were not tailored so that increases in CSE were more likely. The relation between supervisory feedback and CSE also may depend on the developmental level and pretraining CSE level of the clinicians (Larson et al., 1999; Munson, Zoerink & Stadulis, 1986), with untrained individuals reporting large increases. Thus, increased performance feedback may or may not have enhanced CSE within this sample.

Future Directions

Based on these findings, future work is suggested to evaluate ways in which CSE can be increased among clinicians. As the training procedures utilized in this study failed to change CSE, it is important to determine what facets of CSE, if any, are conducive to change. Although the current study evaluated broad CSE, Bandura (1977) theorized that overall self-efficacy is determined by the efficacy and outcome expectancies an individual has regarding a particular behavior. Efficacy expectancies are individuals' beliefs regarding their capabilities to successfully perform the requisite behavior. Efficacy expectancies serve mediational functions between individuals and their behavior, such that if efficacy expectancies are high, individuals will engage in the behavior because they believe that they will be able to successfully complete it. Outcome expectancies, on the other hand, involve individuals' beliefs that a certain behavior will lead to a specific outcome, and mediate the relation between behaviors and outcomes. Therefore, when outcome expectancies are low, individuals will not execute that behavior because they do not believe it will lead to a specified outcome.

As with the current study, the majority of the existing studies investigating change in CSE have evaluated broad CSE without breaking the construct down into the two types of expectancies (i.e., efficacy expectancies and outcome expectancies). Larson and Daniels (1998) found that fewer than 15% of studies on CSE examined outcome expectancies, and of the studies that did, only 60% operationalized outcome expectancies appropriately. While clinicians may believe that they can effectively perform a counseling strategy, they may not implement said strategy if they do not believe that it will produce client change. Ways in which these concepts can be evaluated may include asking, for example, for level of confidence in one's ability to effectively deliver relaxation training, as well as for level of confidence that relaxation training produces client change. Based on the dearth of work in this area, future efforts should involve breaking down CSE and correctly operationalizing efficacy expectancies and outcome expectancies to examine what sorts of influences these expectancies have on overall CSE.

Additionally, future efforts to investigate the enhancement of CSE may evaluate the pliability of this construct depending on level of training. Is CSE more stable among experienced clinicians compared to counseling trainees? Should CSE enhancement be emphasized among new clinicians? Or are different methods needed to increase one's CSE depending on previous experience? This goal may be accomplished by obtaining sizeable, representative samples with beginning, moderate and advanced levels of training, and examining the long-term stability of CSE.

Future work should incorporate strategies of mastery, modeling, social persuasion and affective arousal to enhance the CSE of SMH clinicians. Although role-play was utilized in the current study, future interventions could include visual imagery or mental practice of performing counseling skills, discussions of CSE, and more explicit positive supervisory feedback. Furthermore, mastery experiences (i.e., engaging in a counseling session

that the counselor interprets as successful) in actual or role-play counseling settings have been found to increase CSE (Barnes, 2004); however, this result is contingent on the trainee's perception of session success (Daniels & Larson, 2001). Future efforts to enhance CSE could strategically test how to structure practice counseling sessions and format feedback in ways that result in mastery experiences for clinicians. Future investigations also may incorporate modeling strategies into counselor training, possibly within a group setting. Structuring modeling practices in a group rather than an individual format may facilitate a fluid group session, moving from viewing a skill set to practicing with other group members and receiving feedback. This scenario could provide counselors with both vicarious and mastery experiences.

The use of verbal persuasion—the third source of efficacy—to enhance CSE also has been evaluated in counseling trainees. Verbal persuasion involves communication of progress in counseling skills, as well as overall strengths and weaknesses (Barnes, 2004). While strength-identifying feedback has been found to increase CSE, identifying skills that need improvement has resulted in a decrease in CSE. Lastly, emotional arousal, otherwise conceptualized as anxiety, is theorized to contribute to level of CSE. As opposed to the aforementioned enhancement mechanisms, increases in counselor anxiety negatively predict counselor CSE (Hiebert, Uhlemann, Marshall, & Lee, 1998). Thus, it is not recommended that identification of skills that need improvement be utilized as a tactic to develop CSE. Finally, in addition to clinician self-ratings, future research should investigate CSE's impact on performance as measured by supervisors, as well as clients. With growing momentum for SMH across the nation, it is imperative that all factors influencing client outcomes and satisfaction with services be evaluated, including CSE.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The authors reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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School Counselors' Perceptions of Competency in Career Counseling



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 481–496
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/lwm.4.5.481

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The National Office for School Counselor Advocacy stated that secondary students need better support from professional school counselors when making decisions regarding their postsecondary education and career. The present qualitative study explored school counselors' perceptions of competence in the area of career counseling, and resulted in the following themes: challenges to delivery, opportunity, self-doubt, reliance on colleagues, and the use of technology. Recommendations for college and career readiness best practice were incorporated with the findings from the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy report.

***Keywords:* school counselor, career counseling, competence, postsecondary education, qualitative study**

No step in life, unless it may be the choice of a husband or wife, is more important than the choice of a vocation. . . . These vital problems should be solved in a careful, scientific way, with due regard to each person's aptitudes, abilities, ambitions, resources, and limitations, and the relations of these elements to the conditions of success in different industries. (Parsons, 1909, p. 3)

Young people exploring career decisions are often left to their own searches to find direction in this complex process. Ninety-five percent of high school seniors expect to attain some form of college education, yet more and more are delaying entry after high school, frequently changing colleges or majors when they do enter, or taking time off throughout their programs (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdahl, 2011). According to The College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA), professional school counselors need to better support students during the decision-making process in order to streamline their progress toward postsecondary education and career readiness (Barker & Satcher, 2000; Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014). School counselors must balance this heady task with accountability in other areas, such as academic achievement, social and emotional development, and related administrative duties.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model for School Counseling (ASCA Model) was developed and recently updated by the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP), which supports school counselors and counselor educators by standardizing and enhancing the practices of these professionals (ASCA, 2012). With the release of NOSCA's survey results, a new movement in school counselor reform emerged, which calls for standardization of practices involving college access for all students. According to The College

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Board (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014), this reform is necessary to highlight the lack of support students receive in their pursuit of higher educational goal attainment.

School counselors have historically lacked a clear identity in role and function (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014; Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009; Dodson, 2009; Johnson, Rochkind, & Ott, 2010; Reiner, Colbert, & Pérusse, 2009), and in response, many states have adopted the use of some form of the ASCA Model as a guide for practicing school counselors (Martin & Carey, 2012; Martin, Carey, & DeCoster, 2009). Not all states provide such guidance for their school counselors and, as a result, some school counselors are left with little continuity among schools, even within the same school district. Some counselor educators have called for more support and supervision for school counselors (Brott, 2006; DeVoss & Andrews, 2006; Somody, Henderson, Cook, & Zambrano, 2008); however, a gap between education and professional responsibility, and consequently liability, has remained apparent (Foster, Young, & Hermann, 2005; Pérusse & Goodnough, 2005). It is important to note that the aforementioned reform is linked directly to the roles and functions of school counselors (Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009; Pérusse & Goodnough, 2005). According to NOSCA, 71% of school counselors surveyed stated that they believed academic planning related to college and career readiness was important, but only 31% believed their school was successful in fulfilling students' needs in that area (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014). The gap between what they believe to be important and how they deliver information and assist students in using the information is critical.

To successfully bridge the gap and provide students with a consistent avenue for college and career readiness, more attention must be directed toward training school counselors and clearly defining the roles and functions of school counselors to other school professionals (Dodson, 2009; Mason & McMahan, 2009; McMahan, Mason, & Paisley, 2009; Reiner, Colbert, & Pérusse, 2009). Further inquiry is necessary to determine the possible impact of revised training and practice on the profession as well as on school counselors' relationships with students, parents and the school community stakeholders. Counselor educators are not solely responsible for the role development of the school counselors they train; however, they have an increased personal responsibility as well (Paisley & Milsom, 2007; Pérusse & Goodnough, 2005). Consistent dialogue between counselor educators and school counselors-in-training regarding role competence in career development may provide an avenue to overall effectiveness.

Currently, professional school counselors are expected to offer comprehensive, well-balanced, developmental, evidence-based school counseling programs that target social and emotional supportive services, educational and academic planning, and vocational education for all students (ASCA, 2003; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Dugger & Boshoven, 2010; Foster et al., 2005; Martin & Carey, 2012; Martin et al., 2009; Pérusse & Goodnough, 2005). However, high school counselors continue to be scrutinized in light of the poor marks they receive from high school students and graduates regarding the counselors' involvement in their respective postsecondary planning processes (Gibbons, Borders, Wiles, Stephan, & Davis, 2006; Johnson et al., 2010).

School counselors serve in multiple—and often demanding—educational and counseling roles. In addition, school counselors are asked to further the academic and educational missions of the school, seek teacher and administrator buy-in to an integrated comprehensive guidance program, and act in a proactive manner that will enhance collaboration among all facets of the school and community (Brown, 2006; Dodson, 2009; Green & Keys, 2001; Walsh, Barrett, & DePaul, 2007). Keeping these functions in mind, one can see how critical it is for school counselors to develop particular skills in order to provide services, to promote a strong professional identity, and to obtain regular supervision and consultation (McMahan et al., 2009).

In many cases, school counselors develop competencies in their roles while performing the duties assigned by their administrators or counseling supervisors; however, the basic educational training that occurs preservice

can vary dramatically. In the field of counselor education, many issues impact the curriculum and philosophy of school counselor training programs including (a) the accreditation of the program by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and (b) the degree to which programs offer training in how to utilize the ASCA Model (ASCA, 2003). The CACREP training standards have gained popularity among state certification and licensure boards (such as those in Louisiana and New Jersey), and some boards now require all candidates seeking certification or licensure to have completed CACREP-accredited counseling programs in order to be eligible for professional certification or licensure. Certainly, not all counselor training programs are CACREP-accredited, and those that are CACREP-accredited likely vary in how they address the standards. Yet, many school counselor trainees will encounter similar standards presented in the newly revised ASCA Model as they pursue state certification or become involved in ASCA as a student or professional member (ASCA, 2012).

The ASCA Model provides a tool for school counselors to design, coordinate, implement, manage and evaluate school counseling programs, but the specifics on how school counselors address each area varies (ASCA, 2012). School counselors are expected to demonstrate competency in the areas of academic achievement, social and emotional development, and career counseling. However, career counseling competency is often minimized in relation to other areas because the accountability measures are not fully developed. Also, the results cannot be determined until years after students leave high school (Belasco, 2013; McDonough, 2005), and due to so many commitments falling upon school counselors, their time to provide specific career interventions can be limited (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011; Deil-Amen & Tevis, 2010).

The leaders of ASCA (2012) have encouraged secondary school counselors to spend at least 40% of their day conducting career assessment, engaging in development and planning postsecondary activities with students (e.g., individual student responsive services, group guidance activities, college and career indirect services); yet, according to Clinedinst, Hurley, and Hawkins (2011), high school counselors devote only 23% of their time to this cause. School counselor education programs minimally address this disparity (Foster et al., 2005). Most programs offer one course in general career development theory, assessment and counseling, which would translate to roughly 6% of students' training within a 48-hour program, and only 5% for programs requiring 60 credit hours of graduate work. Although CACREP (2009) has called for counselor educators to infuse career development throughout the program curricula, school counselors have reported they did not feel competent in the delivery of career programs (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014).

Given the convergence of an increased number of school counselor education programs seeking accreditation (Urofsky, personal communication, March 28, 2014), increased calls for accountability in school counseling programs (Wilkerson, Pérusse, & Hughes, 2013), and the growing influence of the ASCA Model (Martin et al., 2009), it seems imperative that school counselors be prepared to address the vocational and transitional needs of the secondary student. A gap exists between what is expected and suggested by the national standards for a comprehensive guidance program and what is actually being taught in school counselor preparation programs, specifically in the area of college and career readiness (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014; Clinedinst et al., 2011; Engberg & Gilbert, 2014; McDonough, 2005). School counselors must have an appropriate cache of career counseling techniques in order to be effective leaders, not just possess a basic understanding of career development theories (Zunker, 2012). Osborn and Baggerly (2004) suggested the following:

High school is a crucial time for students to make career and/or postsecondary training decisions. If there were any group of school counselors who needed to have a large proportion of their time devoted to career counseling, it would be high school counselors. (p. 55)

Bridgeland and Bruce (2014) stated in the NIOSCA report that “counselors are also largely enthusiastic about supporting college and career readiness initiatives, but here again, do not think they have the support and resources to successfully promote their students’ postsecondary achievement” (p. 12).

Hines & Lemons (2011) proposed refocusing university training programs for school counselors to emphasize educational access, opportunity and equity in college, and career readiness, with an increased focus on interns utilizing college and career readiness curricula with students in their schools. They also recommended the revision of school counselor job descriptions to focus on postsecondary planning, the use of performance evaluations connected to student academic outcomes and college and career readiness standards, and the need for persistent professional development in order to cultivate effective college and career readiness counseling programs.

By continuing to examine school counselor training and consequent job competency standards, it may be possible to determine gaps in training and how counselors compensate for their lack of knowledge in serving their students. Career counseling theory and application play a role in how school counselors work with students in postsecondary planning, and where a lack of knowledge exists, a lack of services exists as well (Perrone, Perrone, Chan, & Thomas, 2000). The rising costs of higher education, paired with students’ lack of concise college and career planning, make the school counselor’s role more important than in past decades.

School Counseling

Borders and Drury (1992) determined that “school counseling interventions have a substantial impact on students’ educational and personal development. Individual and small-group counseling, classroom guidance, and consultation activities seem to contribute directly to students’ success in the classroom and beyond” (p. 495). School counselors have shared responsibility for students acquiring knowledge necessary for successful mastery of essential developmental skills at the secondary level (Myrick, 1987; Sears, 1999). The need for appropriate and relevant training of secondary school counselors is critical to ensure that the students they serve receive challenging academic paths that will impact their quality of life long after they leave high school (Erford, 2010).

The CACREP standards for counselor training serve as a guide for counselor education programs to include when determining elements and experiences essential for training competent school counselors. However, the standards were not established to provide any support or structure for the postgraduate professional working in the schools (Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Pérusse, Goodnough, & Noel, 2001). ASCA provides professional school counselors with support through the National Model to administer appropriate programming to students at the secondary level, including career planning. The question remains whether counselors-in-training receive access to the appropriate coursework and relevant experiences to adequately prepare them to fulfill their role in the schools, as suggested by historical perspectives (e.g., the vocational needs of students) and the current national standards for the profession.

The area of career development and postsecondary planning is one in which counselors-in-training may not receive adequate instruction or supervision (Barker & Satcher, 2000; Foster et al., 2005). With the acceptance of the 2016 CACREP standards revisions, counselor education programs would be required to demonstrate how they assess students’ competencies using data “gathered at multiple points and using multiple measures” (CACREP, 2014, p. 6). Counselor educators must determine how to measure competency in career development throughout their programs. Some programs offer one course in career counseling, development or assessment, while other programs may choose to meet the standards in other ways. While students may gain

training experience in career counseling through internship hours at the master's level, career development is not a required part of the internship experience. Through the use of standardized tests that measure students' knowledge of career counseling theory (e.g., Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination, National Counselor Examination), counselor education programs would be partially meeting the requirements for CACREP accreditation under the new standards. Testing graduate students on their knowledge of career counseling theory, however, does not provide an indicator of the students' ability to provide comprehensive career counseling programs upon graduation. Using multiple measures of competency throughout the program may be a more effective way to accurately measure professional skill and readiness to provide career services to students.

A recent review of the counseling and education literature yielded several articles confirming the deficiencies in school counselor training and the increased need for additional competence among school counselors to provide college and career readiness programming to students, including information on financial literacy and the cost of higher education (Belasco, 2013; Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014; Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). Some educators may argue that the standards have been infused throughout their school counselor training program curriculum, yet there is no evidence within the professional literature of a consistent standard of practice. As a result, the question remains: Can counselor educators provide the necessary curriculum and expect that counselors-in-training will retain enough information to be able to provide services competently to students?

The educational recommendations versus the professional expectations imposed upon the school counselor may seem unrealistic, and at times, inappropriate (Brott, 2006; Clinedinst et al., 2011; Foster et al., 2005). An inconsistency between the amount of preparation and the expectations of school counselors' work roles is apparent (Dodson, 2009; Reiner, Colbert, & Pérusse, 2009) and is highlighted in the NOSCA report (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014). One might wonder how and where school counselors obtain adequate preparation for their professional roles. The authors in this study attempted to explore and document this information within the context of the schools in which the participants worked. Once again, the need to reform school counselor education programs is evident, and the voices of these counselors may help identify the specific areas in which to begin.

Method

The research questions proposed in this study were addressed using a qualitative research design. A phenomenological research inquiry (Creswell, 2013) was used to assess participants' experiences, preparedness and perceptions of competency related to career counseling with high school students. The goals of using this approach stem from the core ideals of phenomenological research (Colaizzi, 1978; Osborne, 1990; Wertz, 2005), which seeks to understand "how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning" (Patton, 1990, p. 104). Based on the premise that human beings by nature strive for a sense of self in the world of work and the knowledge that they have to use in their work (Crotty, 1998), it was imperative to develop an awareness of the relationship between the data and the participants within the context of the study (McCroskey, 1997; Merriam, 1998). With this goal in mind, participant responses were assessed using the methodological processes of grounded theory, and shared meanings grounded in the data were further derived (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Participants

Participants were chosen using a purposeful and convenience criteria sampling method (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007), and identified from the first author's community network of school counselor colleagues located in two Midwestern states. These counselors referred other secondary school counselors in

their communities to the current authors for potential participation in the study. To select the participants, the authors previewed a convenience sample of 18 secondary school counselors from urban, suburban and rural public schools. They chose specific participants based on differences in age, ethnicity, gender, number of years of experience as a high school counselor, and those who hold master's degrees from both CACREP and non-CACREP programs. In an effort to diversify the sample, the authors did not select participants with similar characteristics. The authors directly contacted the identified school counselors, and the nine participants agreed to participate in the study (see Table 1 for identifying characteristics). Each participant and school name was changed to protect identity.

Table 1*School Counselor Participant Information and School Information*

Participant Name	Participant Description	Graduate Program	Years of Experience	School Description
Jane	White female in her late 20s	CACREP	1	Shermer High School: urban; public; 2000 students; 45% F/R lunch*; 41% White, 31.8% Asian, 18.8% Hispanic, 7.4% Black, .8% American Indian; 6 other counselors
Diane	White female in her mid-40s	CACREP	9	Shermer High School: urban; public; 2000 students; 45% F/R lunch*; 41% White, 31.8% Asian, 18.8% Hispanic, 7.4% Black, .8% American Indian; 6 other counselors
Alan	White male in his late 50s	NON-CACREP	20	High Bridge High School: suburban; public; 2301 students; 18.4% F/R lunch*; 65.7% White, 16.3% Hispanic, 10.3% Asian, 5.7% Black, 1.8% Multiracial, .1% American Indian, .1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; 11 other counselors
Christine	White female in her early 50s	NON-CACREP	20	High Bridge High School: suburban; public; 2301 students; 18.4% F/R lunch*; 65.7% White, 16.3% Hispanic, 10.3% Asian, 5.7% Black, 1.8% Multiracial, .1% American Indian, .1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; 11 other counselors
Noah	White male in his early 30s	NON-CACREP	6	High Bridge High School: suburban; public; 2301 students; 18.4% F/R lunch*; 65.7% White, 16.3% Hispanic, 10.3% Asian, 5.7% Black, 1.8% Multiracial, .1% American Indian, .1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; 11 other counselors
Tom	White male in his early 60s	NON-CACREP	40	Mayfield High School: urban; public; 2058 students; 27% F/R lunch*; 45% White, 39% Black, 12% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 2% American Indian; 5 other counselors
Kimberly	Hispanic female in her late 30s	CACREP	4	Ridgemont Jr./Sr. High School: rural; public; 222 students; 54% F/R lunch*; 65% Hispanic, 31% White, 3% Asian, 1% American Indian, 0% Black; no other school counselors in building
Vivian	White female in her early 30s	CACREP	6	Bedford High school: rural; public; 645 students; 10% F/R lunch*, 85% White, 12% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 1% American Indian, 0% Black; one other counselor
Vanessa	Hispanic female in her early 30s	CACREP	1	Hill Valley High School: rural; public; 401 students; 52% Hispanic, 45% White, 2% American Indian, 1% Black, 0% Asian/Pacific Islander; no other counselor in building

Note. All participant and school information has been changed to protect identities.

*Students receive free or reduced-fee lunch based on household income.

Procedures and Data Collection

As part of the data collection process, a personal audit trail (Merriam, 1998) was utilized to minimize and account for specific feelings or opinions formed by the primary investigator. As a former school counselor, the first author had areas of training, and professional and personal experiences that were similar to, or different from those of the research participants. The journal served as an appropriate place for the primary investigator to document feelings regarding these issues and issues of counselor training.

Merriam (1998) suggested that researchers share a common language with the participants of the study; to that end, in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews lasting 45–55 minutes were completed. The following nine research questions were asked:

1. Tell me about your overall experience in your counselor training program.
2. Tell me about your experiences in that program with regard to instruction you received in career development delivery models with high school students.
3. How has the training you received in career development prepared you for your work with students?
4. What type of continuing education training have you received in the area of career development since finishing your degree program?
5. Describe your level of confidence in your ability to provide students with career development information and guidance.
6. In what areas, if any, do you feel unsure (or less sure) of the information you are providing?
7. What would have aided you in attaining competency in career development and postsecondary planning?
8. How much career counseling did you do during your internship?
9. How did you see your preparedness in career development in relation to your colleagues' preparedness?

The first author for the study recorded the interviews electronically and then transcribed or typed the interviews using a traditional word processing program. The information obtained from the transcripts was compiled into one data set, which represents the voices of all nine participants. This author also obtained official transcripts from the participants' master's degree programs in school counseling to track the number of courses they took in career counseling and development. The participants provided information regarding the accreditation status of their training program as CACREP or non-CACREP at the time they obtained their degrees. At the conclusion of each interview, the first author immediately moved to another location in order to write initial thoughts (i.e., field notes) regarding any physical or nonverbal responses of the participants. The first author wrote notes in a research journal regarding any personal researcher biases that emerged (Creswell, 2013). The field notes, transcript and program accreditation status served as additional data that were shared with the research team for triangulation purposes, specifically to enrich the data collected during each interview.

Analysis

Interview data were subjected to a rigorous *phenomenological reduction*. Also known as *bracketing* (Husserl, 1977), this is the process of extracting significant statements from the actual, transcribed interviews with the participants. The authors utilized Denzin's (1989) suggestions to extract statements, including (a) locating the key phrases and statements that speak directly to the phenomenon in question; (b) interpreting the meanings of these phrases as an informed reader; (c) obtaining the subjects' interpretations of these phrases; (d) inspecting the meanings for what they reveal about the essential, recurring features of the phenomenon being studied; and (e) offering a tentative statement, or definition, of the phenomenon in terms of the essential recurring features (see Figure 1 for steps in analysis process).

A total of 543 significant statements were analyzed and coded for inclusion in the theme-building process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Curry & Bickmore, 2012). The nine counselors' statements were then grouped into categories as similarities emerged among them. This process gave each statement equal weight in contributing to the final analysis, regardless of which participant made the statement (Patton, 1990). New categories were formed until each statement had been grouped, totaling 17 in all. At the conclusion, the sample was determined rich enough to reach *saturation*. According to Creswell (2013), saturation occurs when pieces of information are put into categories and the researcher begins to see repetition among the data being categorized.

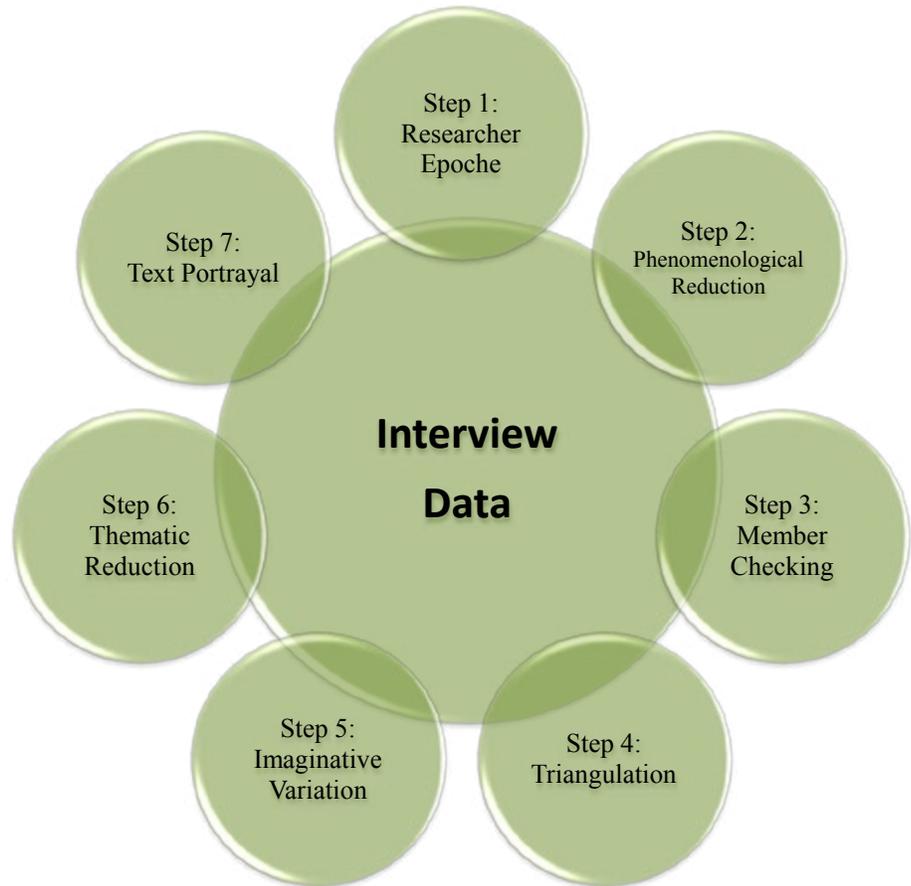


Figure 1. Interview data steps

Trustworthiness

Once saturation was reached, the first author's epoche (journal) was utilized to control for bias, and *member checking* was used to confirm the trustworthiness of the data. The act of member checking includes obtaining confirmation from the participants that the extracted statements from the interviews were accurate and inclusive (Creswell, 2013). Each of the nine participants reviewed their statements via e-mail and confirmed the accuracy and true representation of their thoughts and feelings. Triangulation of the data (i.e., comparing the researcher's journal to the participants' verified statements) further confirmed the results. At that point, imaginative variation and thematic reduction were employed to provide an organized, rich description of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Imaginative variation. The process of imaginative variation (Denzin, 1989) asks the researcher to *horizontalize* the data, or place the extracted significant statements of each participant side by side to compare, group and organize the statements into comprehensive ideas. The first author collected overall themes by physically cutting the statements out and dividing them into groups of similar statements. This process gave "each statement equal weight" in contributing to the final analysis, regardless of which participant made a particular statement (Patton, 1990). The deconstructed data set made the meanings of the participants' stories clearer.

Thematic reduction: School counselor themes. The meanings derived from the counselors' statements were grouped into common themes. The authors read and examined the counselors' statements until words or phrases surfaced that represented patterns of feelings or thoughts that were repeated consistently throughout. These common words or phrases were grouped into major thematic areas that represented the collective voice of the participants.

Findings

Four themes emerged that indicated school counselors experienced feelings of under-preparedness in helping students plan for postsecondary pursuits, including (a) awareness (subtheme: feelings of incompetence), (b) theory versus reality (subtheme: disconnect of formal education), (c) acquiring competence (subthemes: colleague networks and technology), and (d) training needs (counselor education programs).

Awareness: Incompetence versus competence. Positive or desirable characteristics of a competent school counselor, particularly in the area of career development, were compiled to create a *textural portrayal* that illustrated the picture of a highly competent school counselor. Collectively, the participants indicated that a competent school counselor would have the following characteristics: (a) the ability to secure accurate information and provide it to students quickly, (b) active membership in state or national school counseling organizations, (c) use of professional networks for professional development, (d) well-maintained connections with students in spite of large caseloads, (e) outreach to marginalized student populations, and (f) personal respect and reflection of the role of a professional school counselor.

When the more specific themes were examined, the counselors described characteristics of the competency levels they possessed; however, they believed they were not living up to self-imposed standards. Most of the counselors' statements referred to their perceived lack of competency in performing their roles in the schools, as opposed to positive feelings of competency. One of the participants, Vivian, stated, "A kid would come in and I would think, please, let's talk about suicide or something because I am not so hot in this [career counseling] area." This counselor considered herself more prepared to assess a student's risk for self-harm than to help guide him or her toward a career path. Vivian believed that her training had inadequately prepared her, and did not remember what she was supposed to do to help students look beyond high school. She expressed frustration and the need for more tailored training, specifically on how to deliver comprehensive career and postsecondary planning curricula. Another participant, Noah, stated, "I am sure those kids know way more what their plans are going to be and what their options are than I do, and that is not the way it is supposed to work. It is something that I should know." This counselor had become aware that he lacked the skills necessary to work with students, and his perceived helplessness prevented him from being engaged in the process. This school counselor needed resources to fill the gap and help him reach his students.

Theory versus reality. Throughout the dialogue with the participants, one common thread was that the formal instruction and implementation suggestions from their graduate training were inadequate. One participant, Noah, strongly voiced his concern with these training deficiencies by stating, "I don't feel like I had enough [career training], it goes back to . . . well, they gave us theories. I did not get any specifics on how to use them." Another counselor, Alan, stated, "We had a very good understanding of the theoretical [career counseling] model. It was very lacking in how to convey it to the kids or how you work with kids. This is where I think it came up short." The voices of all the participants reflected this type of statement. Some of the participants believed that they had been introduced to career counseling theory and some assessment tools; however, they noted that they had not received sufficient instruction on how to apply these concepts when working with students. In addition, none of the participants were able to recall a particular standard for career assessment or planning for secondary school counseling that they might use as a guide when working in the schools.

Colleague networks. In order to combat the noted deficiencies, participants reported forming both formal and informal networks with other colleagues to gain competence in the area of career development. Noah stated, "Luckily I had a friend or two . . . who were good counselors and . . . I learned a lot from them." The idea of learning how to create and implement career development programming on the job resonated throughout the

participants. Diane stated, “I still know that at any time I can call somebody who will know something,” and Vivian said, “Thank God for other counselors because I wouldn’t know where to start.” The importance of colleague networks to the perceived competency of each counselor was made apparent by all the participants, not just the ones represented here. They seemed to rely on one another most often to supplement the gaps in information, more so than consulting other resources available to them.

Utilizing technology. The school counselors made numerous statements regarding the use of technology at their jobs. They mentioned the use of specific programs, and the consensus seemed to reflect that everyone used computer technology in some capacity. Some counselors believed that particular programs purchased by their districts were not useful to them, while others pointed to the use of computers as a resource for gaining competency in providing career development counseling to their students. Vivian stated, “We finally decided to go with the . . . [career development online program], which now has been probably the most used resource by our kids, by our staff, and by the counseling office simply because it is so easily accessible.” Alan also noted the following:

We got it [the online career development program] not only for the kids . . . but for the parents, the community, PR, and making ourselves a viable part of their development. . . . This has been a big plus for us because it forces contact with every kid in an easy, very positive type conference.

A third participant, Kimberly, recalled, “I can point them in the right direction now. The computer is so much easier and the students respond to it.”

The technology-based career development programs appeared to be used more readily by the counselors than any other counseling tool. Some of the benefits of technology-based programs include the following: Students can access information independently (autonomy), students can access career information from any computer at the school or from their homes (accessibility), and counselors can provide answers to students’ questions quickly (time-sensitivity). The computer-based, Internet programs gave confidence to the counselors that the information was up-to-date and accurate. They used the computer and Internet-based programs to work more efficiently and provide students with consistent, research-based career development programming. This resource provided school counselors with confidence where they lacked it prior to using these tools.

Training needs. Participants were forthcoming about what they needed; for example, they would have benefited from specialized training prior to starting their roles as professional school counselors. Throughout the interviews, the counselors interjected their dissatisfaction with their preparedness upon completing their master’s degree programs, to varying degrees. Interestingly, the statements grouped into the training needs category were not gathered in response to a particular question, but rather as they naturally occurred throughout the interviews. Even the participants who stated they were satisfied with their training overall offered suggestions for improving school counselor training programs based on their unique experiences in the field.

Vanessa stated the following:

I think as school counselors, the counseling part one-on-one we see once [in] awhile, but it is geared more towards career and preparing the kids. . . . I think one thing that would have helped me a lot was maybe having college recruiters or admission counselors come into the class and talk about what they look for on an application or in essay questions. I think that would have helped me help my seniors this year.

Similarly, Diane said that it would have been helpful to know “just the day-to-day what does a career counseling program look like or what does a career counseling program in a high school look like?” Other participants did not identify specific training areas that would have helped them; but they acknowledged that continuing education was necessary based on what was provided in their graduate programs. Kimberly reflected, “I would say that out of the 75 kids that we have [grades] 9–12, I would say maybe 20% have a skill that they can use if they were to drop out of school. It is one area that I am really not comfortable in right now.” School counselors carry the responsibility to prepare students for post-graduation, but how they accomplish this task is left to the specific counselor, school or school district.

Jane’s statement reflects her desire for more specific training curricula:

I think that training programs hopefully will evolve and will begin to become more specialized . . . it [career development] is definitely an area that needs more than one class. Three credit hours when 55 are required? It is probably one of the most important things for school counselors to know.

Few counselors echoed this call for more coursework, but specialized training in and out of the classroom was seen as a necessary part of gaining competency for all participants. While a number of the participants were passionate about the idea of increasing training in career development within counseling training programs, the collective voice of the counselors’ statements demonstrated the variety of struggles and frustrations the participants encountered, and still encounter, along the way.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand how school counselors view their roles, and how they understand and deliver career counseling curricula to students. Nine counselors made statements consistent with feelings of inadequacy and incompetence in their ability to provide adequate career development programming to their students, as well as unpreparedness upon completion of their counselor education programs. The findings are consistent with the reviewed literature, given that even those counselors who made positive statements regarding their overall experiences in their programs clearly reflected uncertainty regarding their competence level in career development in general (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014; McDonough, 2005), but especially in how to deliver useful career programs to students (Clinedinst et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2010). The particular training programs that these counselors completed to obtain licensure differed. Additionally, the secondary data collected from participants (i.e., CACREP vs. non-CACREP degree programs) indicate that accreditation and the completion of a course in career theory and application appear irrelevant regarding the participants’ perceptions of overall competency.

The authors noticed that the agitation in the counselors’ voices subsided when they discussed the steps they took to gain competency in this area. For some participants, it was a friendly colleague who showed them the way it had always been done, or the discovery of a new online resource that helped them quickly provide answers to their students’ questions. The counselors identified specific strategies that they used to improve their competency, but said that they relied heavily on their professional networks for support.

The three urban counselors reported that they were more prepared than their colleagues were in terms of providing career development programming that utilized technology. The three rural and three suburban counselors believed that they were close to or at the same level of competency as their colleagues. Additionally, all three urban counselors believed that funding or political obstacles within their respective districts prevented their success. Some participants also noted that they relied on technology because it had been purchased by

their schools and was the only resource available. For a number of the participants, the isolation and lack of connection to other counselors furthered their sense of frustration and disconnectedness.

Participants employed professional mentoring and consultation in some cases; however, these counselors reported that they utilized informal, personal networking extensively. They described these relationships as casual, question-and-answer partnerships. These relationships were not formally structured with specific goals as in mentoring relationships, but rather were formed out of necessity for team building and information sharing among colleagues. The counselors valued these contacts more than any other resource they had acquired since completion of their degree programs.

The big picture of what it means to be a competent school counselor resonated loudly through the voices of the participants. They uniformly reported that despite their struggle to achieve competency, there was an overarching sense that their efforts were not enough. The counselors' feelings of incompetence in the area of career development significantly impacted their ability to address the needs of students. The quiet desperation resonating in their statements magnified their perceptions of how they lacked what they needed to help prepare students for life after high school. School counselors have an understanding of who they would like to be in the schools, but oftentimes they believe they fall short (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Many school counselors lack the confidence or competence to navigate the college counseling process effectively, thus leading to overall perceptions of incompetence in career development (Clinedinst et al., 2011; Engberg & Gilbert 2014).

The lack of competency in career development that these school counselors expressed may imply that a certain degree of insecurity and real or perceived incompetence are expected when one starts out in the field. However, if the degree of preparedness among these participants is at all representative, it may indicate that more focus on career development practice is needed in counselor education programs. According to Hill (2012), it is important to emphasize counselor-initiated strategies for college and career readiness interventions—something this group of school counselors found challenging. Addressing this need is a critical issue for school counselor educators as they design training curricula and experiences. Again, participants stated that they had received valuable information in their programs regarding the specifics of *what* career development is, but not *how* to use it with students. The missing link between knowledge and know-how for these counselors is palpable. School counselor educators and supervisors must take note and develop career counseling curricula that address the needs of their counselors-in-training, as well as the needs of the future students they will serve.

Recommendations

As a result of the information obtained from this study and with the support of the NOSCA report and other studies published in recent years, a need clearly exists for career development training standards to be integrated into graduate programs for school counselors (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014; Clinedinst et al., 2011; Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). Specifically, counselor educators may adequately identify deficiencies in the overall training model by isolating the differences between anticipated transitions, role adoption and professional development. Participants in the present study believe that they and future school counselors would benefit from a more applied, community-based experience, much like the professional development schools model suggested by Clark and Horton-Parker (2002), and a standard of practice to better serve their students.

The plan outlined by NOSCA includes implementing a process by which all secondary school counselors follow a set of standards while working with students on college readiness from academic, social and career perspectives (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014). Ideally, these standards would be consistent among school counselors across the country to ensure all students access to adequate college preparation and postsecondary planning.

Graduate-level courses offered in the form of additional electives, such as counseling the college-bound student or career and technical education, would provide opportunities for growth in areas not currently available in most graduate counseling programs. In response to the growing need for high school counselor competency in postsecondary planning, some states are now offering an additional licensure endorsement for school counselors; for example, in Colorado, school counselors complete two graduate-level courses already offered within CACREP programs (i.e., individual counseling, career development) and one additional two-credit course in career and technical education, offered through the Colorado Community College System. Upon completion of the three courses, school counselors may then apply for the additional endorsement in career and technical education (Colorado Department of Education, 2014). This effort supports the Common Core Curriculum implementation in Colorado and many other states where school counselors are now expected to provide academic advising to directly reflect their students' career cluster interests.

With the recent passing of the Langevin-Thompson Amendment to the Success and Opportunity through Quality Charter Schools Act (H.R. 10, 2014), school counselors working in charter schools will now be asked to provide documentation of their comprehensive career counseling programs in order for schools to obtain priority status when applying for federal funding. This movement, which currently applies only to charter schools, may begin to find its way into all public school funding requests, thus making career counseling curriculum development and implementation a priority for all school counselors. With the support of ASCA, the Association for Career and Technical Education, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, this movement will continue to grow, and the need for well-trained school counselors who are able to provide comprehensive career counseling programs will increase.

Limitations

In this study, the authors used several measures in order to preserve the internal validity of the study, such as researcher epoche, triangulation and member checking. In keeping with the tradition of qualitative research, the participants were not studied in isolation but in environments in which the studied phenomenon continues to occur. It is safe to assume that the participants' statements were not without bias, because few inquiries involving human interactions and perceptions are without bias. The authors selected nine participants from a convenience sample of high school counselors from rural, suburban and urban areas within two Midwestern states in the United States. The relationship of the counselors to the first author, although limited, may have reflected a need to please or demonstrate competency where little may have existed. Despite the limitations of the study, the findings contribute to the literature regarding school counselors' perceptions of their abilities to effectively deliver career counseling programs. Also, the findings further emphasize the need to reform the training methods through which school counselors provide college and career readiness services to students.

Implications

Given the results of this study, it would be negligent to ignore the possibility that school counselors may be placed in positions with less than adequate training in career development. Counselor education programs have an obligation to prepare school counselors in more role-specific areas (e.g., college and career readiness), given that the national average ratio of students to school counselor is 471:1, which is well above ASCA's recommended ratio of 250:1 (<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/ratios10-11.pdf>). Doing more with less has always been a challenge for school leaders, and preparing school counselors more effectively to meet the needs of their students may empower a new generation of counselors to lead students into the 21st century workforce.

The authors acknowledge that this particular study includes only the voices of nine school counselors; however, their voices loudly echo NOSCA's findings and support the need for school counselor standardization of practice in promoting, teaching and facilitating career and postsecondary planning for all students (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2014). Currently, most school counselor education programs do not highlight this area, yet this area represents the very heart of school counseling services at the secondary level. ASCA (2012) has deemed this area important enough to provide school counselors with standards with which to guide their daily activities, but training programs offer limited exposure to actual planning and implementation of career services. This study exposes a disconnection between training and practice standards in school counselor education, which has led to feelings of incompetence and discouragement in these nine school counselors. Regardless of how the counselors compensate for this lack of training, this phenomenon exists. Whether they graduated from CACREP or non-CACREP programs, all of the participants in this study believed that they were equally incompetent in providing career development programming to students. Therefore, future CACREP standards and ASCA Model revisions, as well as state credentialing boards, must include guidelines by which school counselors are trained, specifically reflecting their appropriate job duties and responsibilities in college and career readiness programming. Future school counselors may be better equipped to address the needs of their students, parents and communities if this area of training is expanded and integrated as an essential component of counselor education programs.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The authors reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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Understanding Military Culture: A Guide for Professional School Counselors



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 497–504
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/rfc.4.5.497

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School counselors must be knowledgeable about military culture in order to help military students and their families in a culturally competent manner. This article explores the nature of this unique culture, which is often unfamiliar to educators, including its language, hierarchy, sense of rules and regulations, self-expectations and self-sacrifice. Specific suggestions, such as professional development, self-examination and cultural immersion experiences, are provided so that professional school counselors can increase their multicultural competence when working with this population. Finally, a case study illustrates the challenges associated with this culture and implications for school counselors in regard to increasing cultural competence when working with military families are discussed.

Keywords: military, school counselors, families, culture, cultural competence

The professional school counselor is called to be a culturally competent practitioner (Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2011). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) position statement on cultural diversity emphasizes that school counselors should work for the success of all students from all cultures (ASCA, 2009). Overall, school counselors should work to develop their self-awareness, knowledge and skills when it comes to working with students from diverse cultures (Remley & Herlihy, 2014).

While other cultures have been explored in-depth in the professional school counseling literature (Bradley, Johnson, Rawls, & Dodson-Sims, 2005; Byrd & Hays, 2012; Smith-Adcock, Daniels, Lee, Villalba, & Indelicato, 2006; Yeh, 2001), military culture has not. Military culture is often unfamiliar to educators (Atuel, Esqueda, & Jacobson, 2011) who encounter military students and their families regularly. Every school district in the United States has a child who is in some way connected with the military, and 80% of all military children attend public schools (Military Child Education Coalition, 2014). Therefore, it is essential for school counselors to be knowledgeable in navigating military culture in order to support military students and their family members in their schools (Luby, 2012; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014).

Overall, military culture is a unique one (Luby, 2012) that presents distinctive challenges for its service members and their family members (Brown & Lettieri, 2008; Gooddale, Abb, & Moyer, 2012). While the military itself can be viewed as a profession, the military extends into the service members' personal realms as well, affecting everyday lifestyle as well as the lifestyle of family members (Cozza & Lerner, 2013).

Visible and Invisible Aspects of Culture

While strategies for working with military children and their families during deployments have been investigated in the professional literature (Allen & Staley, 2007; Cole, 2012; Robertson, 2007), this article

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explores military culture in order to help increase the school counselor's knowledge and awareness. McAuliffe (2013), citing the metaphor of an iceberg, encouraged counselors to explore both the visible (above water) and invisible (below water) aspects of culture. Culture that is most easily observed by outsiders, like the tip of an iceberg above water, is considered *surface culture* (McAuliffe, 2013). Culture which is not observed by outsiders, like the larger part of the iceberg under the water, is considered either *shallow culture* or *deep culture* (McAuliffe, 2013). Shallow and deep culture correspond to more intense emotional experiences that may require extensive counseling services and support from the school counselor (The Iceberg Concept of Culture, n.d.; McAuliffe, 2013).

The present author seeks to inform the school counselor about the nature of surface, shallow and deep cultural aspects of the military and provide implications for school counselor practice. In order to fully describe the nature of military culture and its meaning for military students and their family members, this article begins with an exploration of the surface-level aspects of military culture (language, hierarchy, sense of rules and regulations) and then progressively explores the more emotionally intense shallow and deep aspects of military culture (self-expectations and self-sacrifice). Finally, this article presents a case study that illustrates a professional school counselor's culturally competent approach to working with a military student.

Language

The first area of military culture explored in this article is language, which is a visible, surface-level aspect of the military lifestyle. Encountering military culture has been compared to navigating a foreign country, with its language an important aspect of this navigation (Huebner, 2013; National Military Family Association, 2014). Each of the five military branches has its own set of terms and acronyms that relate to job title, position, location, services, time and resources for military service members and their families (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014). Each military branch also has its own set of moral codes (Kuehner, 2013) such as honor, courage and strength, which affect the service member's personal and professional outlook (Luby, 2012). Learning and understanding the language embedded in military culture is essential for professional school counselors in order to remove any communication barriers between the school counselor and family members (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014).

Hierarchy

Hierarchy is another important visible, surface-level cultural aspect of the military community. Rank and order are rigid in the military, with service members expected to show respect for and compliance with their superiors (Martins & Lopes, 2012). This authoritarian structure may be mimicked in the military family's home life as well (Hall, 2008). Overall, a service member's rank determines how much is earned financially (Huebner, 2013; Luby, 2012), how much education is provided, the level of access to resources (Hall, 2008) and the expected amount of responsibility (U.S. Department of Defense, 2014). The service member's rank impacts the family members' identity and sense of self, as the family identifies with their position in the military community (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003). School counselors should be aware that rank may influence not only the family's economic level, but their stress level as well, as it may determine the length and frequency of the service member's deployments (Luby, 2012).

Sense of Rules and Regulations

Moving deeper beyond the visible culture, military culture embodies a strong sense of rules and restrictions, as there are clearly defined rules and expectations for military service members and their families, including etiquette guidelines for spouses and children regarding dress, mannerisms and behavior in public (U.S. Army War College, 2011). Military families are directed where to live, when they can travel and with whom they can socialize. Additionally, higher ranking service members receive authority over the family's personal life. For

example, if a child is misbehaving in school or if the family is experiencing financial difficulties, the service member's superiors may become involved (Gooddale et al., 2012). Failure to abide by rules and expectations may result in expulsion from the military (Kuehner, 2013).

Self-Expectations

Another invisible aspect of military culture on a more intense emotional level are the expectations that military service members and their families hold for themselves. Today's military is a volunteer force, and service members freely join the military lifestyle (Hall, 2008). For these military members willingly serving their country, the concept of *warrior ethos* is prevalent in the military community, as both military members and family members take a sense of pride in their ability to overcome challenges on their own (Hall, 2008; Huebner, 2013). Military culture also promotes the notion of strength and emotional control (Halvorson, 2010), which in turn propels a fear of appearing weak (Huebner, 2013), especially in regard to mental health (Danish & Antonides, 2013; Dingfelder, 2009). School counselors should recognize that this pride may impede the military family members' sense of comfort seeking assistance.

Self-Sacrifice

Imbedded deeper within military culture is the notion of self-sacrifice. Guided by the ideal that the individual is secondary to the unit (Hickman, n.d.), military family members face numerous deployments, relocations and separation from each other (Park, 2011). These challenges are expected and anticipated, as they are a constant reality for military families (Military One Source, 2014) in times of war and peace (Park, 2011). For example, the deployment cycle is continuous, affecting family members as they prepare for, experience and reunite after the deployment (Military One Source, 2014). In the midst of these challenges, over half of military family members have reported that they are satisfied with the military lifestyle (U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005), emphasizing their commitment to routinely facing and overcoming challenges.

Cultural Implications for School Counselors

Self-Examination

Self-awareness is an important aspect of increasing one's multicultural competence and knowledge (Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2011; Remley & Herlihy, 2014). School counselors should first explore their own perceptions and experiences related to the military in order to become more aware of any biases or preconceptions that may affect their work with military families. Questions for reflection might include: What are my perceptions of war? What are my own political beliefs regarding the military and war? Who in my family has served in the military and what is my relationship like with this person?

Professional Development

Seeking ongoing education is essential for school counselors to become multiculturally knowledgeable and competent as they work with military students and their families (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2011). This education might come in the form of workshops or seminars regarding best practices for working with military families (Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2011). If these opportunities are not easily accessible, school counselors might utilize educational resources through organizations such as The National Military Family Association or Military Families United, or through webinars focused specifically on counseling knowledge and techniques related to working with military families (ASCA, 2014). School counselors should be familiar with current professional literature related to best practices in working with military families so that they can understand and adapt these practices in their work with military families (Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2011).

Cultural Immersion

In order for a school counselor to learn more about the nature of military culture, especially in regard to its language, the counselor might more fully encounter the military community (Alexander, Kruczek, & Ponterotto, 2005; Díaz-Lázaro & Cohen, 2001). For example, the counselor could volunteer on a military base and interact with military families, thereby gaining a better understanding of the challenges they face related to their culture. The school counselor also might partner with a military organization such as a Fleet and Family Support Center or the United Service Organization in order to experience military culture and lifestyle. Finally, a school counselor could attend military ceremonies or events that are open to the public in order to experience the rituals and to hear the language associated with military culture.

Culturally Competent Practice

Having acquired knowledge of military culture, school counselors should focus on culturally relevant interventions for working with military family members. School counselors might capitalize on the collective, teamwork mindset of military family members and build partnerships with them to enhance their child's success in school, working to break down resistance that the family may feel toward receiving counseling services and support (Bryan, 2005; Cole, 2012). Learning the military language and becoming familiar with the military's visible and invisible cultural norms constitute an important aspect of unconditional positive regard and support. School counselors also should focus on the strengths of military families as they affirm their potential to overcome challenges in their daily lives (Myers & Sweeney, 2008). Culturally competent school counselors likewise work to promote the sense of self-efficacy in military students and family members, equipping them with the tools and resources they need to be successful academically, socially and emotionally (Zimmerman, 2000). Finally, school counselors should support military family members in their choice of and commitment to making sacrifices, providing them with needed emotional support as they work to overcome the challenges of the military lifestyle.

Case Study

The following case study provides an example of a military child who is struggling emotionally, socially and academically in a school setting. This student's challenges reflect the stressors that military students and their families experience within military culture and lifestyle. Following the case study, the author will provide suggestions for how a professional school counselor might approach this student and his family in a culturally competent manner.

Justin was a 9-year-old elementary school student at Freedom Elementary School. This school was located next to a large military base and mainly served military students who lived in nearby base housing complexes. Justin's father was in the Navy and had recently left for a 9-month deployment. Justin lived with his mother and two younger sisters, ages 2 and 3. Justin's father was a high-ranking sailor who would be considered for promotion the next year. He had served in the Navy for 15 years and was eager to advance to a higher rank.

Justin's teachers referred him to the school counselor because his grades had dropped. They reported that Justin appeared to become easily and visibly frustrated during math class, so much so that he often broke his pencil and began to cry. When Justin's teachers tried to help him, he assured them that nothing was wrong and denied any feelings of anger or frustration. Justin's teachers reported that socially, Justin was friendly with several of his classmates who lived in his neighborhood, but seemed aloof during lunchtime and recess. He preferred to work individually in the classroom and showed signs of resistance when assigned group tasks. Justin's teachers contacted his mother, but she assured them that he was doing fine at home and would be "a good kid" at school as well.

When the school counselor invited Justin into her office to assess his situation, Justin proudly reported that his father had left him “in charge” of the family while he was away. Justin told her about his father’s ship and his important job in keeping the other sailors safe during the deployment. When the school counselor gently inquired about Justin’s frustration in the classroom, he stated that he wanted to do well in school to please his father, who expected him to receive good grades. When he did not know the answers to his math problems, he became angry with himself. Justin then asked the school counselor not to tell his mother about his feelings of frustration and anger because he did not want to “bother” her with his problems. He was accustomed to hearing her crying at night and sometimes slept with her so that she would not have to be alone. Justin also worried about appearing strong to his classmates, many of whom had parents who worked with and for his father.

A culturally competent school counselor should recognize several cultural factors affecting Justin’s well-being related to his family’s military lifestyle. First, even at this young age, Justin carried a strong sense of duty and self-sacrifice, seeing himself as a warrior in battle (Hickman, n.d.). Like many service members and their families, Justin also had high self-expectations (Halvorson, 2010), as he wanted to perform academically to please his father. Another military cultural factor affecting his well-being is that Justin seemed to resist help from his teachers, asserting his independence and attempting to demonstrate an appearance of wellness for his classmates and his mother, for whom he assumed emotional responsibility (Hall, 2008; Huebner, 2013). Even in the midst of these struggles, similar to other service members and their families who proudly persist in the midst of challenges, Justin professed pride in his father’s work and role in the military and hoped to see his father continue successfully in his career path (U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005).

After listening to Justin talk about his self-expectations and the emotional and social challenges he faced, the school counselor asked Justin if he would like to meet with her each week to talk more about these issues. The school counselor told Justin that she also would observe him in his classroom to check on his progress and to see how she can better help him. However, she would do so under the premise that she was observing the class as a whole, so that his classmates would be unaware of her true purpose there. She explained to Justin the tenet of confidentiality and how his classmates would be unaware that he was visiting her office on a regular basis (Linde, 2011). Justin seemed relieved at her suggestion and eagerly agreed to talk with her further.

Suggestions for School Counselors

When counseling Justin individually, using appropriate military terminology (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014), a professional school counselor should first work to build rapport in order to explore his feelings. As a military child, Justin should be affirmed and thanked for his role in his father’s deployment and his efforts to comfort his mother.

In order to address his difficulties in the classroom, the school counselor can equip Justin with anger management or self-soothing techniques to use when frustrated. In addition, the school counselor can focus on increasing Justin’s leadership qualities and abilities, which are a key aspect of military culture. This focus on leadership development has been found to help in building anger management skills and behavioral self-efficacy in children and adolescents (Burt, Patel, & Lewis, 2012). In order to further decrease his frustration in the classroom, the school counselor can provide areas of academic support for Justin, such as a tutor in the community (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). The school counselor should finally explore Justin’s feelings of missing his father as the family progresses through the stages of deployment, as well as his feelings of worry about his mother (Cole, 2012). Throughout these conversations, the school counselor can show respect for the military ideals that Justin professes, encouraging him to hold reasonable self-expectations and to take pride in his desire to succeed in school.

The school counselor also can partner with Justin's mother during the deployment. Affirming her strengths and the warrior ethos that she too may carry, the school counselor might offer Justin's mother support in terms of resources in the community that she might find helpful during this time (Bryan, 2005). After building rapport with her, the school counselor can encourage the mother to seek individual counseling or support groups to help with any emotional issues related to the absence of her husband, explaining the importance of her social and emotional functioning to the social and emotional functioning of her children (Chandra et al., 2010; Gibbs, Martin, Kupper, & Johnson, 2007). If Justin's mother expresses concerns over confidentiality and fears endangering her husband's upcoming promotion due to the appearance of weakness within the family, a common concern in the military community, the school counselor can work with Justin's mother to find resources outside the military community or in a geographically remote area (Danish & Antonides, 2013; Dingfelder, 2009).

In addition to supporting her emotionally, the school counselor might consider empowering Justin's mother's role as a parent as she cares for her young children during the deployment. She might educate Justin's mother on the stages of deployment and how she might best help her children move through each of these stages (Cole, 2012). Finally, the school counselor might encourage and facilitate open communication between Justin and his mother so that they can express their feelings to one another. Justin's mother should be aware of his struggles so that she can work to support him during the time of separation from his father (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012).

Conclusion

As seen in Justin's case, a great need exists for culturally competent school counselors to support our military families (Brown & Lettieri, 2008; Gooddale et al., 2012). School counselors should be knowledgeable about military culture so that they can successfully support military families in overcoming the challenges that they face (Luby, 2012; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014). Once school counselors are able to understand and navigate this unique culture, both the visible and invisible aspects, they will heed the call of providing equitable services to all students and their families (ASCA, 2009).

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The authors reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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Group Counseling with South Asian Immigrant High School Girls: Reflections and Commentary of a Group Facilitator



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 505–518
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/pvv.4.5.505

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The diversity of the U.S. school population speaks to a need to provide support for youth from various backgrounds. As a school-based mental health counselor, the first author observed that the South Asian immigrant students at her school did not utilize any of the counseling services provided. Because South Asians are typically collectivistic, the counselor chose group counseling as a potential intervention and hoped to provide a place for the students to address issues related to orienting to a new school in a new country. In this article, the authors weave information about the South Asian population into the first author's reflections and commentary on initiating and conducting a group with South Asian high school girls. Recommendations for group counseling in schools with South Asian immigrants are provided.

Keywords: South Asian, immigrant, youth, schools, group counseling

The United States has seen a marked increase in the number of children who have at least one parent born outside the United States (Capps et al., 2005). Between 1995 and 2012, the population of first- and second-generation immigrant children in the United States increased by 66% (Child Trends Data Bank, 2013). This sharp rise is important for American cities because 95% of all children of immigrants attend urban schools (Fix & Capps, 2005). Furthermore, according to a recent update from the Asian American Federation and South Asian Americans Leading Together (2012), the South Asian American population was the fastest growing major ethnic group in the United States from 2000–2010. Relationship building is part of acclimatizing to a new country for immigrant youth, and it is in the schools that these youth build new friendships and create social networks (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). For South Asian youth in American schools, group counseling can provide a setting for students to connect to others who share similar stories and experiences. Groups can offer a safe place for them to discuss their cultural norms, exchange stories of challenges and hope, and enhance their social development in a new country as they form emerging adult identities.

As a school-based mental health counselor in a public urban high school on the northern California coast, the first author's responsibility is to provide overall behavioral health support through assessments, counseling (short- and long-term, individual, group, crisis), staff and teacher consultations, and presentations on mental health issues to students, parents and teachers. When two South Asian students were referred for individual counseling, the first author wondered if other South Asian students might be experiencing challenges associated with adjusting to a new school in a new country. She also was personally aware of difficulties associated with identity development for adolescents negotiating different home and school cultures. She decided that

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counseling focused on prevention of problems related to acculturation and identity could be helpful to the South Asian students in her school. Because the South Asian collectivistic orientation is consistent with the goals of group counseling (Sharma, 2001), she chose this approach. As a South Asian herself, the first author believed that her understanding of South Asian culture could contribute to her effectiveness as facilitator of a group with this population. Thus, the first author developed a simple strategy for recruitment and set out to create a group for South Asian immigrant high school students.

Although in many cases the first author's expectations about the group were met, she also confronted surprises and challenges. This article is the result of discussions with the second author in which the first author shared her reflections and commentary on the facilitation of students' exploration of issues in the group. The goal is to impart the first author's personal knowledge and perceptions, so that counselors working with South Asian youth may consider how her experience might inform their group work with this population. A secondary goal is to inspire other counselors to find ways to meet the needs of immigrant youth in their own schools and clinics through group counseling. A very brief overview of South Asian culture will provide a context for understanding these reflections.

South Asian Culture

This section provides information about South Asian culture as it relates to the first author's personal experience facilitating a group with South Asian immigrant girls; the authors do not intend stereotypical representation of South Asian adolescents or their families. The girls with whom the first author worked had both similarities and differences based on their cultural backgrounds, level of acculturation and individual personalities.

The term *South Asian* is used to describe people of various religions and nationalities who trace their cultural origins to the Indian subcontinent (Assanand, Dias, Richardson, & Waxler-Morrison, 1990; Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997). Countries of South Asia include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (The World Bank, 2011). According to 2010 estimates (Pew Research Center, 2012), the majority of South Asians practice Hinduism or Islam, but there also are South Asians who practice Buddhism (the majority religion in Bhutan and Sri Lanka), Christianity or other religions. Overall, there is great diversity within this population with regard to religious affiliation, language, immigration history, socioeconomic status and education (Inman & Tewari, 2003). Despite their differences, South Asians generally share some common characteristics including customs, values, family expectations and beliefs that relate to mental health (Maker, Mittal, & Rastogi, 2005). Specific values include formality in interpersonal relationships, inhibition of strong feelings, respect of elders, primary allegiance to the family and deep respect for religion (Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999).

Unlike other Asian American groups, South Asian immigrants have not been studied by social scientists to any appreciable degree (Maker et al., 2005). Existing research on South Asian individuals and counseling suggests that South Asian Americans have neutral or positive perceptions of mental health care, but infrequently use mental health services (Panganamala & Plummer, 1998; Sue & Sue, 2008). This reality may be due to South Asians' lack of awareness of available services, cultural and language barriers, or fear of confidentiality breaches. Another reason for this infrequent use of mental health services may relate to the South Asian belief that disclosing mental problems or mental illness brings shame and stigma to the entire family (Atkinson, 2004). Moreover, research suggests that South Asians are likely to make external attributions and spiritualize emotional problems while emphasizing somatic complaints and academic or career concerns (Sandhu & Madathil, 2007). The first author used her personal understanding of South Asian culture to help inform recruitment and facilitation of the group.

Recruiting Participants for the Group

Recruiting immigrant and minority populations for counseling services involves providing an accessible service delivery location (Yuen, 1999). Recommended approaches for attracting group members include advertisements (e.g., hallways posters), referral networks (e.g., teachers) and announcements (e.g., classroom presentations; Gladding, 2008; Kline, 2003). The first author decided to take a straightforward approach by putting up posters and flyers around the school—in hallways and homerooms, and on bulletin boards. Because it was important to use language that lacked stigmatization, she carefully planned the posters. She used a term familiar to South Asians, *Desi*, which describes individuals who identify themselves as South Asian or with South Asian culture (e.g., music, traditions, films, food). The flyers read, “Come and meet other Desi’s in the school! Want to learn more? Come to room 200.” That approach, however, proved ineffective; after two months not a single student had inquired about the group. Next she asked teachers for referrals, approached the identified students during their homeroom period and described the group. Again, she used terms such as *support group*, *sharing*, *confidential place* and *time to meet others* in lieu of the more stigmatized language of *mental health counseling*. Although most students showed interest, they communicated skepticism about joining a group.

Refusing to give up, she pondered Yuen and Nakano-Matsumoto’s (1998) suggestion highlighting the importance of finding an appropriate point of entry for recruiting immigrant populations. She walked around campus targeting the places where South Asians congregated during passing hall periods and lunchtimes. She introduced herself, discussed her role at the school, disclosed her own ethnic identity as a South Asian and invited students to drop by her office at lunchtime. After an entire semester of drop-in encounters, a group of girls agreed to participate and the idea of a group for South Asian students became a reality.

Background of the Group Facilitator and Participants

When contemplating recruitment for the group, the first author believed that her background would be advantageous. Born in London, England, she was raised in an Asian Indian family; she speaks Hindi and Gujarati (Asian Indian languages) in addition to English. It seemed intuitive that her commonalities of background and language with the students would facilitate initial recruitment as well as rapport building. (As she learned, however, this was only partially true).

The group participants were first-generation immigrants, born outside the United States, or second-generation immigrants, born in the United States. All group members identified culturally as South Asian, but came from different countries in South Asia. They shared similar customs, food, clothing and popular culture (film and music). However, because the students’ home countries were different, the students spoke various languages. Moreover, as the group progressed, distinct cultural traditions (e.g., age of marriage) and values (e.g., definitions of beauty) emerged, along with differences in the girls’ perspectives on those beliefs and values. As the authors describe the first author’s reflections of the group, they carefully maintain the anonymity of the girls’ disclosures and share only overall themes and activities in the context of South Asian culture in general.

Reflections on Facilitating the Group

When the first author chose group work for the South Asian girls, she identified the counseling group as the most appropriate type of group. The counseling group utilizes members’ interactive feedback and support to help address problems of living, which may be related to transitions or development (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2010). For adolescent immigrant students, these everyday problems often involve the challenges of adjusting

to a new culture and developing a cultural identity (Ahmad-Stout & Nath, 2013; Shariff, 2009). The first author sought to provide a safe place for the South Asian girls to explore these issues of acculturation and identity. She presented topics at each session designed to encourage this exploration.

The first author's approach to counseling this group was integrative; she borrowed concepts from relational-cultural theory as well as multicultural counseling. Relational-cultural theory is based on the idea that psychological growth takes place in the context of relationships characterized by empathy, mutuality and empowerment (Comstock et al., 2008; Jordan, 2000). Multicultural counselors also promote empowerment by helping clients develop strategies for exercising control in their lives (Crethar, Rivera, & Nash, 2008; Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar, 2009). Based on these concepts, the first author's goal was to provide a safe space in which the South Asian girls could build mutually supportive relationships and where she could help promote the girls' self-confidence as South Asian females.

Consistent with the beginning stage of a group, the members were initially reluctant to disclose information (Corey et al., 2010). Despite the first author's similarity in background to the South Asian girls in her school, it still took time for them to perceive her as a safe person with whom they could share. She allowed time to build rapport and trust to aid the girls in overcoming their reluctance about help seeking. Openly discussing the expectations and goals of the group was helpful in creating safety and served to ease student anxieties about committing to a weekly group. The first author clearly laid out group expectations in the first session, invited input from all group members and highlighted confidentiality. Although members initially avoided sharing personal experiences about family, boyfriends and sexuality, two girls were very vocal about less intimate issues. After approximately 12 sessions (halfway through the group), there was a noticeable shift as all members began to disclose their experiences. At this point, the level of trust in the group allowed the girls to explore issues at a deeper level, which is one characteristic of a working stage (Corey et al., 2010). Two outcomes of the group suggested movement toward the relational-cultural theory and multicultural counseling goals of relationship building and empowerment. About midway through the group, the girls began socializing at school; and later, toward the end of the group, they continued to build relationships by spending time at each other's homes. Additionally, the girls' confidence showed at termination when they asked to form their own South Asian group, which the first author helped them create.

The topics presented for discussion in the group involved asking the girls to answer a list of questions that the first author formulated: "What does it mean to be a South Asian female in our school?," "What is it like to navigate dissimilar home and school cultures?," "What gender messages do you receive as a South Asian girl?" and "How do media messages shape your identity as a South Asian female?" The following discussion provides additional information about South Asian culture as a backdrop for the first author's reflections on the girls' exploration of these topics.

South Asian Lifestyle in a U.S. School

Asian Indian immigrants in Western cultures often continue to base their lifestyle on traditional values, beliefs and expectations (Farver, Bhadha, & Narang, 2002). This includes unwritten rules, such as respecting adults, so adults do not tolerate rude or disrespectful speech from children. South Asian girls must heed strict family rules regarding girls' roles (which may include caring for younger siblings), respect for elders and male members of the family, and choices related to school and college. For example, family rules often prohibit dating, having male friends and being out after school. In group sessions, these topics permeated the discussion, as expected.

Also guiding South Asian lifestyle is collectivism. South Asian girls are taught to respect the importance of community as part of what it means to be South Asian. In the context of the group and their collectivistic orientation, it was especially important for the girls to feel connected and understood by the other girls. Sharing enjoyment of similar foods (e.g., roti, samosas), conversing in English and Hindi, and exploring what it is like to be a South Asian girl in the United States created a sense of group cohesion. This cohesion established an environment in which the girls could feel emotionally supported and empowered in an unfamiliar school environment.

Despite the apparent safety of the group environment, however, the first author noticed that the girls were sensitive to feedback and needed to consult with each other on decisions (e.g., what school clubs to join). The power of group decision making became significant in the group. When the first author initially asked for individual opinions (i.e., “What do *you* think?”), the girls were reticent. This restraint reminded the first author of her own upbringing, in which older members of the family made decisions jointly, and the message she internalized was that she was not supposed to offer a viewpoint. The first author felt an urge to overcome any sensitivity a girl might have to rejection or shame due to expressing ideas different from those of other group members. She found herself helping the girls to express their own thoughts and opinions, even if they differed from those of the other girls. When the first author explained that the group was a place to express thoughts and feelings that they were unable to express at home, many of the girls began to open up.

South Asian Girls’ Challenges in Negotiating Dissimilar Cultures

The dialogue around navigating home and school cultures was not surprising. The first author expected identity development to be a major issue, along with struggles to integrate South Asian cultural identity with mainstream American norms, expectations and culture. Facilitating the group brought up memories of negotiating home and school cultures in the first author’s own adolescence in London. As an Indian/South Asian in an urban high school that was over 90% Caucasian, she often felt different from others not only in terms of physical appearance (e.g., skin and hair color), but also because of family cultural activities. She felt embarrassed explaining her Indian/South Asian cultural beliefs and values to peers. Her role as a teenager was to follow family rules, respect elders and play a traditional female role (e.g., learning to cook, taking care of siblings). Her non-Asian school friends could not understand this cultural dilemma or the cultural restrictions placed on her behaviors (e.g., not going out after school). She was forced to adopt a dual identity—at home, the traditional Indian/South Asian girl, and at school, a more stereotypically British teenager. The girls’ dilemmas mirrored the first author’s experience as a teenager and she was able to understand their disclosures in a personal way. She was sometimes viewed as *didi* (“sister” in Hindi). It seemed advantageous to be perceived as a family member, yet this was only partially true (and explained later).

Within the context of navigating two cultures, the theme of academics came up frequently. Because a primary motivation for the immigration of South Asian parents is educational opportunity, high aspirations for their children are common (Ghuman, 2003). It did not surprise the first author that the girls had internalized messages from parents and put pressure on themselves to succeed in school. However, South Asian immigrant youth have an added pressure that stems from the fact that they must contend with schools that differ from those in their native countries. Immigrant students may come from South Asian schools that have very strict rules with rigid guidelines regarding teacher–student interaction, but they must adapt to the less formal educational approach in U.S. high schools. U.S. teachers often encourage students to express their thoughts and feelings, while South Asian parents instill in their children that openly expressing their opinions to adults shows disrespect. The first author supported the education of the girls in their U.S. school by helping them build self-confidence in expressing their viewpoints. She initiated discussion about ways for the girls to voice their opinions in the classroom to help them succeed in U.S. schools and provided an opportunity for them to practice these strategies.

In addition to these internal struggles, attempting to fit into a mainstream American school often comes with other costs for a South Asian girl. Because of the differences between Western and South Asian traditional value systems, adolescence can be a difficult time for South Asian immigrant families (Ranganath & Ranganath, 1997). An exacerbating factor borne out in research is that “children of immigrants adapt more quickly to the new culture than do their parents” (Farver et al., 2002, p. 13). These circumstances can create conflicts with parents around issues such as choice of friendships, dating and education. South Asian immigrant girls may observe their mainstream American peers having different adolescent experiences (e.g., spending time with boys) and may want to have the same experiences. In doing so, or even considering doing so, they may deal with anxiety and helplessness as well as fears of parents finding out. Although the girls’ dilemmas were similar to those in the first author’s experience as an adolescent, she was nonplussed at times by the depth of the struggles of the first-generation girls in negotiating the two cultures. As a second-generation South Asian, the first author was born and raised in London. In contrast, many of these girls were born in their home countries and immigrated to the United States, some of them as teenagers. Thus the first author was sometimes challenged to grasp their difficulties in comprehending American culture, and she had to work assiduously to facilitate their understanding of foreign ideas and practices. She was sometimes unnerved by the intensity of the girls’ internal struggles to process the conflicts between the values and beliefs of their home and school cultures. Therefore, she realized the critical importance of giving careful attention to providing a nonjudgmental space for the expression of the girls’ frustrations related to these differences.

Gender Messages Received by South Asian Girls

Within traditional societies such as India, there are different expectations for male and female behavior (Farver et al., 2002). In traditional South Asian families, males are permitted greater independence, personal autonomy and educational opportunities, whereas females are restrained (Dasgupta, 1998; Ghuman, 1997). For example, females are expected to perform household chores and take care of younger siblings, while boys are allowed more freedom (e.g., going out after school). According to Ghuman (2003), South Asian families in the West also tend to be more lenient with boys, even overlooking breaking of social and family rules, precipitating distress for many South Asian girls. In particular, exposure to mainstream American culture may further increase girls’ distress in response to South Asian culture’s seemingly unfair expectations of girls and boys. Girls may feel overprotected by their parents, inferior to their male counterparts and envious of American-born South Asian girls who follow less traditional roles. It is important to remember, however, that there is variation in the messages that South Asian youth receive depending on a number of factors including socioeconomic status. In her middle-class family, the first author was socialized on how to behave (e.g., what to say, how to dress) as a female in order to obtain a husband. Coming from a high Hindu caste family, however, afforded more privileges such as access to education and social connections, which can result in opportunities outside the home.

Media Messages and South Asian Girls’ Identity Development

Youth often look to role models in identity development, and there are few South Asian public figures and role models in the media to whom South Asian youth can relate. Research in which Asian American children reported admiring Black figures first and White figures next (entirely overlooking Asian and Latino figures) supports this idea (Cortés as cited in Aoki & Mio, 2009). In the group, the first author helped the girls examine how South Asians are viewed in American media and discussed Bollywood (i.e., Indian film industry) movies, which present current Hindi film stars. In the film *Om Shanti Om* (Khan & Khan, 2007) the heroine, Shanti, is a beautiful, tall, slender Indian woman who has an unfulfilled relationship with a man because of her parents’ disapproval. Role models such as Shanti represent beauty in South Asian culture, and exposure to standards

of beauty that differ from Western beauty ideals is helpful for young South Asian females' self-image. Additionally, however, South Asian girls need exposure to a broader range of role models to enhance their development. Currently, there are many successful South Asian American individuals who integrate South Asian and American identities in the worlds of academia, business, entertainment, politics, media and the sciences, and the first author deemed it important to expose the girls to the accomplishments of these people. An array of examples includes Sri Srinivasan (judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia circuit), Anita Desai (novelist), Sanjay Gupta (neurosurgeon & CNN chief medical correspondent) and Norah Jones (singer). The author's hope was that exposure to this diverse range of role models might motivate the girls to explore different careers and inspire them to consider nontraditional career tracks. Moreover, a future goal was to bring in local South Asian role models from the surrounding community.

South Asian youth also draw from traditional Hindi music to shape their identity and represent a sort of new ethnicity (Dawson, 2005). In the group, listening to traditional South Asian music supported the South Asian girls' roots, and listening to music such as Indian music with hip-hop and rap fusion represented a blending of the girls' American and South Asian cultural identities. Sharing music provided a sense of group connectedness, while analyzing lyrics led to fruitful discussions about characteristic gender themes related to being South Asian.

Common Adolescent Issues Among South Asian Immigrants

In addition to the previous topics, the group discussed other issues that are typically important to adolescents. Though South Asian girls tend not to date and often struggle to follow rigid and unyielding norms around relationships (Ayyub, 2000; Durham, 2004), immigrant girls in American schools may want to explore the topic of dating and relationships. In the first author's experience, some South Asian girls may never date, while others may simply refrain from informing their parents that they are involved in relationships. Fear of being caught by parents, family members and friends may precipitate girls' avoidance of dating or permeate the experiences of girls who date.

Related to dating is the topic of ideal partners for relationships. South Asian girls from traditional families are expected to marry a person from the same cultural background (Bhatia & Ram, 2004). For example, families would not accept a union between a Pakistani girl and an Indian boy, even though both individuals are South Asian. For some girls, even thoughts of relationships with boys from different cultural backgrounds may result in sentiments about conflict as well as feelings of shame and guilt about disrespecting the family. Having a space in a school group to discuss these feelings was particularly important because South Asian girls often cannot discuss these topics with family members; and even girls who have no desire to be in a relationship in high school may be curious about such topics. The first author presented the topic of what relationships might look like for the girls in a South Asian community as well as what relationships might look like for their non-South Asian peers. She wondered about the value of disclosing that her spouse was non-South Asian, and decided to do so to address the girls' curiosity about her non-South Asian last name. This information provided a space for the girls to process fantasies they might have about marrying a non-South Asian or someone outside their identified community.

Recommendations for Counseling Practice

From reflections and discussion of the group experience, the authors have developed recommendations for counselors serving South Asian girls in their schools. A primary component in this group counseling experience is the provision of a safe space within which South Asian students can discuss salient issues with other South Asian youth. Equally important, as authors (e.g., Shariff, 2009; Sue & Sue, 2008) have explained, is the

counselor's ability to employ culturally appropriate helping skills and interventions. Counselors must pair these skills and interventions with knowledge of topics that are relevant to the particular youth they are serving. Because identity development is a significant issue for adolescents in general and a more challenging task for South Asian girls who must straddle two cultures, it is critical to focus on this issue.

Creating A Safe Space at School

A primary goal of a group for South Asian girls is to provide a space for them to interact with students from similar backgrounds. Due to size of the student population and variety of schedules in urban schools, it may prove difficult for South Asian adolescents to connect with each other in classes. Moreover, cultural mores may make it prohibitive to meet other students after school, excluding another avenue for interaction. Therefore, group counseling offers a social sphere for interaction, but must of course be a safe space. Moreover, as Chung (2004) explains, a focus on confidentiality is critical in working with any Asian American group because disclosing family matters to outsiders is frowned upon.

Providing a safe psychological space depends not only on sensitive recruitment and open communication, but also on the counselor's ability to analyze personal racial/ethnic beliefs and values in relation to those of South Asians. As part of this self-examination, non-South Asian counselors must explore any preconceived notions based on the portrayal of South Asians in the American media. Additionally, White European-American counselors who seek to develop groups with South Asian youth must carefully and continually explore their willingness to confront their level of privilege. In a study of graduate students in clinical psychology and social work, findings showed a correlation between White privilege attitudes and multicultural counseling competencies (Mindrup, Spray, & Lamberghini-West, 2011). Counselors committed to working with South Asian immigrants should be ready to accept responsibility for change at not only the personal level to better meet the needs of South Asian students in group counseling, but also at the institutional (i.e., school) level to enhance the experience of South Asian students in the school.

Counselors can broaden their knowledge of the South Asian culture by reading as well as watching films about South Asian life. Some recommended films for counselors include *The Namesake* (Pilcher & Nair, 2006) and *Monsoon Wedding* (Baron & Nair, 2001). Suggested books are *Brick Lane: A Novel* (Ali, 2004), *Fasting, Feasting* (Desai, 1999) and *Indivisible* (Banerjee, Kaipa, & Sundaralingam, 2010), an anthology of South Asian American poets who trace their roots to Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Another way to learn is by going to a South Asian neighborhood and immersing oneself. The counselor might observe the interactions between parents and their children, as well as how teens interact among their peer groups. Familiarity with the latest fashion trends in clothes, food, music and films can further help counselors to understand the commonalities and differences within the South Asian population, and in particular with South Asian adolescents. Moreover, community leaders can serve as valuable resources in understanding Asian American populations (Chung, 2004). For example, counselors can build relationships with persons who run community centers and organizations that serve South Asians or with faith-based leaders in the South Asian community.

Counselors who are South Asian may have an easier experience initiating a South Asian group. However, it seems important for the first author to share an observation she has made in her 13 years of working with South Asian students: First-generation students have been more likely to seek her out than to approach her non-South Asian colleagues. However, as students have become more acculturated to mainstream American schools, they seem to be more wary of this student-counselor shared ethnic background. Some students have disclosed concerns about possible connections with the South Asian community in which they live (e.g., "Will you tell my auntie about my activities?"). In those instances, the students seem to seek out counselors who are not South Asian. (Although this cannot be generalized to all South Asian populations, it suggests an interesting area for exploration).

Creating Culturally Appropriate Counseling Interventions

The importance of knowing the backgrounds of the particular members of a group in order to design culturally appropriate interventions cannot be overstated. As many authors have asserted, not all Asians are alike (e.g., DeLucia-Waack & Donigian, 2004; Sue & Sue, 2008), and within-group differences among Asian groups is often overlooked (Sandhu, 2004). This idea holds true for South Asians who may come from a variety of different countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka or Bangladesh. In addition to within-group differences, counselors must consider each adolescent's level of acculturation when identifying counseling strategies.

When designing interventions for group counseling, counselors may look to focus on individual disclosure, individuation and autonomy, and direct types of communication (e.g., confrontation; Corey et al., 2010)—ideals based firmly in Western culture. These goals, however, might not apply to Asians who value humility and modesty (rather than open sharing) as well as group harmony (instead of individual goals), and who might be uncomfortable with direct communication (Chung, 2004; Sue & Sue, 2008). In light of this situation, there are several issues that the counselor must keep in mind when designing interventions.

Personal disclosure. Even within a safe environment, South Asian students may still exhibit a disinclination to share personal information. Counselors can model disclosure by sharing their own family experiences, which can prove beneficial in getting youth comfortable and involved in a group (Sandhu, 2004). However, it is still important that counselors are sensitive to any member's reluctance (communicated either verbally or nonverbally) to disclose, especially because of the cultural value of respect for authority figures (i.e., the counselor), which could precipitate member disclosure and subsequent shame over exposing family information.

Goal setting. Individual goal setting is consistent with Western culture and is often encouraged in group counseling literature (Corey et al., 2010; Gladding, 2008). Because of their collective orientation, South Asians may be reluctant to set individual goals and may want to focus on group goals. Potential goals may involve achieving academic success, exploring family pressures, examining gender roles and discussing taboo topics such as sexuality. The counselor must not, however, overlook a member's desire to set individual goals. (Over time, certain members in this South Asian girls' group did set personal goals.)

Direct leadership. Asians' values related to respect for adults/elders and authority figures (DeLucia-Waack & Donigian, 2004) suggest that a direct leadership role within a structured group format might work best. Initially, the first author provided a structure for the group sessions using expressive art media through which the girls could explore. For example, having the girls create individual collages from magazine cuttings helped them to share about their lives (e.g., favorite foods, clothing, places), and using South Asian and non-South Asian films and books offered metaphors that helped the girls explore their identity. After a few months of leader direction, the first author was surprised to find that the girls felt comfortable setting the group's agenda and openly suggesting session activities. Therefore, counselors should be aware of any indication on the part of the group members that they want to self-direct.

Topics for Exploration

Through group counseling, the first author was able to identify topics that were particularly important to these high school South Asian girls; these areas could serve as a starting point for other counselors working with South Asian immigrant girls. Although the topics were often consistent with salient adolescent issues (e.g., dating, relationships), they were shaped by the girls' South Asian backgrounds. The girls discussed the often contradictory values and beliefs of home and school culture. They explored dual identities related to being South Asian and American as well as multiple identities related to culture and gender.

Examining values and beliefs. Family and culture are important topics for South Asians, but telling stories of family and culture in mainstream American culture may raise challenges. Especially significant is the discomfort adolescents may experience when sharing their cultural stressors with non-Asian peers. A group with peers from similar backgrounds can facilitate open sharing of cultural stories that would be difficult to disclose to those who could not identify with their experiences. In this group, the first author followed Sue and Sue's (2008) recommendation and facilitated discussions about values, beliefs and behaviors characteristic of both the home culture and host culture, so the girls could discover those that fit for them, those with which they identified and those about which they were ambivalent. These discussions pervaded the group sessions, and counselors are advised to explore these topics in depth.

When examining values and beliefs, South Asian girls may broach topics that are unacceptable for discussion with their own families and community members. Because they are often expected to adhere strictly to the role of the "perfect" South Asian girl (e.g., attaining good grades and following family rules), girls may feel judged by family and community members when expressing curiosity about issues such as love, sexuality and relationships. A counselor can help girls examine their roles within their families and explore unique circumstances of developing peer relationships as a South Asian female growing up in mainstream American culture.

An issue that may arise with South Asian girls as they explore behaviors related to values and beliefs involves being under the watchful eyes of other South Asian immigrants. Girls might dwell in a neighborhood where they are in close proximity to local mosques, temples and community centers as well as businesses owned by South Asians. In addition to close and extended family members, they may interact frequently with South Asian peers and neighbors. This can present challenges related to the different values and beliefs of the two cultures the girls are negotiating. For example, some girls may want to talk to boys in the neighborhoods, but fear that South Asian community members might tell their parents. This anxiety underscores the girls' need for support from trusted adults and peers both at school and in their communities as they grapple with these issues.

Coping with dual identities. Because immigrant students are straddling home and school cultures, it is important to explore ways to cope and deal with multiple identities. One goal of a discussion of values and beliefs involves supporting girls' positive connections to their home and community culture. According to Farver et al. (2002), several studies of adolescents from a variety of ethnic backgrounds showed a positive connection between commitment to/identification with ethnic group and self-esteem. A counselor must encourage discussion around cultural topics, emphasize the importance of family traditions and help foster pride in South Asian identity. For example, it is important to recognize religious holidays and explore the meaning of the holidays and their significance in girls' lives.

The group setting can provide a safe environment for girls to explore challenges and voice frustrations related to dual identity. A counselor can help girls deal with the conflict of self versus collective identity through using culturally appropriate self-empowerment and self-esteem exercises. For example, the first author offered the girls an activity in which they made a collective collage (using magazine cutouts, drawings and words) of what it means to be a South Asian female. After the activity, they processed the meanings of the images on the paper, the role of women in South Asian society and school, and the similarities and differences between group members. The activity highlighted the girls' cultural commonalities and differences as well as their shared challenges of dual identities.

An important discussion may involve decision making around behaviors that diverge from home cultural norms, because South Asian youth may choose to deviate from parental and cultural expectations in spite of the consequences. The counselor's responsibility is to help girls explore the pros and cons of pursuing their personal happiness at the expense of their parents' wishes or demands (Segal, 1991). For example, if the topic of dating (an area of conflict between home and school culture) arises, the counselor must help girls explore what it means to them to date, their reasons for wanting to date, and if they are dating, issues related to dating without family permission.

Addressing racism. Racism is an important topic for South Asian immigrants, especially due to the impact of the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001 (9/11). In the aftermath of 9/11, a climate of racial profiling emerged in the United States, and South Asians have been subjected to prejudicial attitudes affecting both personal autonomy and group identity (Inman, Yeh, Madan-Bahel, & Nath, 2007). In the first author's experience, as well as that of many of her South Asian colleagues, racial profiling is not uncommon when traveling, even for professional women. It also is not atypical for South Asians to experience microaggressions, such as being stared at or asked personal questions about ethnicity by strangers. Racism has psychological impacts (Astell-Burt, Maynard, Lenguerrand, & Harding, 2012) and also can create fear. South Asians wearing traditional dress may be subjected to name calling, racial slurs and even physical violence. Adolescents with whom the first author has worked report experiencing teasing or bullying at school as well as other forms of racism when walking with a family member wearing traditional dress (e.g., headscarves, turbans). In a study of South Asian women in Canada, Beharry and Crozier (2008) found that racism in youth had a more marked effect on self-esteem and self-efficacy than that in adulthood. Moreover, social support networks were critical in helping women address negative experiences. A counseling group offers a space for South Asian girls to share their experiences, express their fears and devise ways of coping with racism in a supportive environment.

Reaching Beyond the Girls' Counseling Group

The one challenge that eluded the first author during her recruitment of South Asian adolescents was how to meet the needs of boys. Although it made sense because of gender roles to have an all-girl group, she also recognized the need to address issues for South Asian boys. When the girls' group terminated, she helped them form a South Asian student club within the school. All the girls from the group were members of the wider South Asian club, but in addition to girls, a number of South Asian boys joined. The cosponsor of the South Asian club is a male teacher who, although not South Asian, is Latino and well-liked and respected by students, including South Asians. In addition to finding ways to unite the group, the cosponsor and the first author have supported the boys and girls in working together to explore issues that South Asian students encounter in the school and to develop strategies to help the wider school community understand what it means to be South Asian.

An additional way for counselors to reach beyond the group is to identify any needs of the South Asian families in the school community. One way that the first author has supported parents of South Asian students is by helping them understand the school system (e.g., how grades are interpreted). Parental support is significant in light of findings that suggest parental difficulties in adjustment to a new culture may result in adolescents with more psychological problems (Farver et al., 2002). Thus, support and advocacy for families may in turn reap benefits for adolescents. A significant way to identify needs and issues of families is to connect with community leaders, who can "act as a cultural bridge" to developing relationships with parents and other community members (Chung, 2004, p. 206).

Conclusion

There is a need for research focusing on South Asian American families and a further need for research focused specifically on the issues of South Asian immigrant youth. As the population of South Asian immigrant youth in U.S. communities and schools increases, it is critical to understand the unique needs of these youth who are learning to forge an identity based on their home cultures and mainstream American culture. Because there are differences in the U.S. communities in which South Asians live, researchers also must explore the differences in identity development of South Asian immigrant youth living close to a South Asian community versus those who live in a heterogeneous (non-South Asian) environment. Understanding the South Asian experience in the United States will pave the way for developing culturally appropriate interventions for working with South Asian immigrant youth.

Growing diversity in American schools demands that counselors develop culturally appropriate strategies for working with youth from a wide variety of cultures, including those individuals who come from immigrant families. Today's immigrant families struggle with cultural differences, racism and oppression of earlier generations, but do so in the context of easier access to transatlantic travel and global communication technology (Bhatia & Ram, 2004). Practically speaking, these closer family connections with the home country may create more challenges for adolescents forging an identity while balancing the demands of home and school. The responsibility of helping to enhance the development of these youth falls to counselors along with other school and community personnel, and group counseling is one useful strategy for meeting student needs. Before initiating a group, counselors must explore their own cultural background and biases, understand the culture of the students in the group and, from this knowledge, develop culturally appropriate interventions that highlight culturally relevant and adolescent-specific topics. Through the group described here, the first author attempted to promote the positive development of South Asian girls in her school. The authors' hope is that these efforts will challenge other counselors to find ways to do the same with the immigrant youth in their schools and clinics.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The authors reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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Students' Perceptions of School Counselors: An Investigation of Two High Schools in Beijing, China



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 519–530
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/qs.4.5.519

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This study sought to examine students' perceptions of their school counselors in two high schools in Beijing, China. Independent *t* tests found that female students rated school counselors' availability significantly higher than male students did. Also, students who had received prior counseling services rated counselors significantly higher in the following areas than did students who had never received counseling services: knowledge of achievement tests, friendliness and approachability, understanding students' point of view, advocating for students, promptness in responding to requests, ability to explain things clearly, reliability to keep promises, availability, and overall effectiveness. A 2×2 between-subjects ANOVA found an interaction effect between gender and use or nonuse of counseling services. In general, students gave positive evaluations of school counselors and were satisfied with counseling services.

***Keywords:* school counselors; counseling services; students' perceptions; high schools; Beijing, China**

China has been experiencing dramatic economic and social changes in the past 3 decades (Guthrie, 2012). During this time there has been increased attention to both mental health problems and student development (Cyranoski, 2010; Lim, Lim, Michael, Cai, & Schock, 2010; Xin & Zhang, 2009). It has been estimated that at least 17.5% of the Chinese population has some form of mental illness, one of the highest rates in the world (Phillips et al., 2009), accounting for about 20% of hospitalizations in the country (Fei, 2006). Facing significant mental health challenges, several authors have noted the need for more counseling professionals and mental health service providers (Cook, Lei, & Chiang, 2010; Davey & Zhao, 2012). In rural areas with fewer resources, the demand for mental health care is even greater (Ji, 2000).

Given such great needs for mental health services, China has been making tremendous efforts in reforming its mental health service system (Tse, Ran, Huang, & Zhu, 2013). In 2004, China launched the 686 Project, a mental health reform initiative modeled on the World Health Organization's recommended framework for integrating hospital-based services with a community mental health service system (Ma, 2012). By the end of 2011, 1.83 million Chinese people with severe mental illness had been treated as a result of the project.

While China has witnessed growth in the counseling profession, at the same time it has struggled to build national certification and licensing standards, and create comprehensive counselor training (Chang & Kleinman, 2002; Cook et al., 2010; Davey & Zhao, 2012; Ding, Kuo, & Van Dyke, 2008; Hou & Zhang, 2007). In 2002, China's National Counseling Licensing Board was formed, and there is currently a three-tier national licensing

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program. More than 30 locations throughout China offer the qualification exams for counselors, and recently a national exam to license school counselors was instituted (Lim et al., 2010). Results from a nationwide survey of professional training of mental health practitioners in China showed that quality of training and supervision were among common concerns (Gao et al., 2010). Also, more accredited professional training programs at the university or college level must be designed and established. Beijing Normal University, in collaboration with Rowan University in the United States, was reported to be the first university in China to offer a school counseling training program (Lim et al., 2010).

Mental Health of Students in China

Increased attention to student well-being has shown high prevalence of mental health problems among Chinese students (Cook et al., 2010; Wang & Miao, 2001). Common psychological problems among students included test anxiety, academic pressure, loneliness, social discomfort, video game addiction (Thomason & Qiong, 2008), Internet addiction, child obesity, self-centeredness and reclusion (Worrell, 2008). A study from a metropolitan area in southeastern China showed that 10.8% of high school students had mental health concerns including hostility, compulsions, depression and interpersonal relationship sensitivity (Hu, 1994). A more recent survey conducted by Wu et al. (2012) among 1,891 high school students in a southern city in China showed that 25% of the adolescents reported a perceived need for mental health services, while only 5% of the sample had used school-based mental health services, and 4% had used non-school-based services.

Researchers are starting to identify factors that contribute to Chinese students' mental health problems, including the pressure to achieve academic success (Corbin Dwyer & McNaughton, 2004; Thomason & Qiong, 2008; Worrell, 2008), being an only child (Liu, Munakata, & Onuoha, 2005; Thomason & Qiong, 2008; Worrell, 2008), prevalence of physical abuse (Wong, Chen, Goggins, Tang, & Leung, 2009), inability to cope with multiple expectations and requirements (Tang, 2006), increased attention to personal and social development (Corbin Dwyer & McNaughton, 2004), and the generation gap between children and their parents (Thomason & Qiong, 2008). Zheng, Zhang, Li, and Zhang (1997) suggested that parents and teachers who did not attend to students' psychological problems contributed to the high rates of mental health problems among students. Because they have the most direct interaction with students, homeroom teachers and subject teachers in China are well-positioned to help students address their mental health concerns. In fact, Chinese homeroom teachers perform a wide variety of counseling tasks (Shi & Leuwerke, 2010). However, teachers do not receive sufficient training in providing counseling services.

School Counseling in China

School counselors are uniquely positioned to impact the mental health and academic success of students in China. As would be expected with developing professions, there are numerous challenges to school counseling in China: (a) a tremendous shortage of qualified school counselors (Cook et al., 2010; Shi & Leuwerke, 2010; Thomason & Qiong, 2008; Yan, 2003; Zheng et al., 1997), (b) an urgent need for more accredited training programs (Gao et al., 2010; Leuwerke & Shi, 2010; Lim et al., 2010) and (c) a lack of support and respect from teachers and other school staff (Jiang, 2005; Leuwerke & Shi, 2010). Although many schools in China, especially in urban areas, have begun to establish counseling offices and hire school counselors, this profession is still in its primitive developmental stage (Leuwerke & Shi, 2010). Moreover, school counselors themselves have expressed great need for more training and standard education to better serve their students (Leuwerke & Shi, 2010). A standardized training system is imperative to provide training, assessment, issuance of licenses and continued education (Cook et al., 2010; Davey & Zhao, 2012; Yan, 2003; Zheng et al., 1997).

Facing the serious situation of Chinese students' mental health concerns and school counseling challenges, the Chinese government has turned greater attention to advanced mental health education in K–12 schools. Government policies on education reform have put more emphasis on students' mental health and the availability of psychological services (Ding et al., 2008). The Ministry of Education in China has published two important government guidelines in the past 2 decades. "Several Suggestions on Improving Mental Health Education in Elementary & Secondary Schools" (Zhong guo jiao yu bu, 1999) identified moral and politics teachers, homeroom teachers, Communist Youth League cadres, and school counselors as the personnel in schools responsible for the mental health needs of students. K–12 schools with available resources and funding were required to establish counseling offices, and school counselors were identified as the leaders of this system (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 1999). In 2012, the Ministry of Education released the updated version of "Guideline of Mental Health Education in Elementary & Secondary Schools." This guideline described the goals, content and methods of mental health education as well as the personnel responsible for delivery. The report specifically called for educating students about basic knowledge and skills regarding interpersonal relationships, career development, and living and socialization (Zhong guo jiao yu bu, 2012).

As required by the Chinese government, schools in large cities have begun to hire school counselors to provide counseling for their students (Jiang, 2005). In K–12 schools in China, school counseling is called *school guidance* or *mental health education*, which is actually a part of political and moral education (Jiang, 2005). School guidance in K–12 school settings has been taught as a subject course like math or science (Hou & Zhang, 2007). In addition to school counselors, homeroom teachers also play an important role in mental health services for students by performing a large range of counseling tasks (Shi & Leuwerke, 2010; Wang, 1997). Chinese students access psychological services in schools through a variety of channels: individual counseling, group activities, lectures on common psychological concerns, parent and teacher consultation, and classroom guidance (Leuwerke & Shi, 2010).

The expansion of services in the Chinese school system has made counseling more accessible than ever to students (Thomason & Qiong, 2008). However, empirically based literature examining the role, function and scope of school counseling in China is virtually nonexistent (Jiang, 2005; Leuwerke & Shi, 2010; Shi & Leuwerke, 2010; Thomason & Qiong, 2008). Very little is known about the amount of counseling that students actually receive at school, let alone how students perceive school counselors and the school counseling services they receive (Leuwerke & Shi, 2010). The present study sought to examine some of these questions. Through surveys of students at two high schools in Beijing, the authors explored students' use of counseling in school as well as their perceptions of the school counselors. The authors also examined possible differences among students who sought services or not, as well as any differences across gender. Correspondingly, the research questions in this study were as follows: (a) How many students seek counseling services and how often do they meet their school counselors in these two high schools in Beijing? (b) Do students' perceptions of the school counselors differ across gender? (c) Do students' perceptions of the school counselors differ depending on whether or not they seek counseling services? (d) Do male and female students' perceptions differ depending on whether or not they seek counseling services?

Methods

Participants

A total of 137 (47 male, 90 female) students from two high schools in Beijing completed questionnaires; 293 surveys were distributed, resulting in a return rate of 46.76%. The sample was recruited through the first author's contacts in Beijing. Among the students who completed the survey, 126 were from a high school

affiliated with Beijing Normal University and 11 were from a high school affiliated with Beijing Renmin University. The sample consisted of 12.4% ($n = 17$) senior 1 students (equivalent to 10th graders in the United States), 78.8% ($n = 108$) senior 2 students (equivalent to 11th graders in the United States) and 8.8% ($n = 12$) senior 3 students (equivalent to 12th graders in the United States). The two high schools recruited for the study are among the top ranked high schools in Beijing. The school counselors being evaluated in these two high schools had an average of 8 years of experience working as professional school counselors. Students from these schools typically perform very well in academics and gain admission to universities after high school. As for plans after high school, 97.8% ($n = 134$) of the students surveyed stated that the plan was a 4-year college, with only three students indicating “other plans.” No student indicated planning to attend a 2-year college or vocational training school or get a job right after graduating from high school.

Instrument

Participants completed a brief demographic questionnaire as well as the Chinese High School Students’ Perceptions of School Counselors Survey. All information students provided in the survey was anonymous. The demographic questionnaire included items such as students’ grade level, gender and postsecondary plans. The Chinese High School Students’ Perceptions of School Counselors Survey used in this study was adapted from McCullough’s (1973) survey that was originally designed to determine high school students’ perceptions of school counselors’ services in the United States. Some changes were made to adapt to Chinese students’ cultural background, including adding two questions about the number of times that students had tried to see the school counselor and the actual number of times that they had met with the school counselor. After indicating the number of times they had tried and actually met with a school counselor, participants rated their counselor’s ability and effectiveness on a four-point Likert scale (4 = excellent, 3 = good, 2 = fair, 1 = poor) in the following 11 areas: knowledge of college admission, knowledge of vocational information, knowledge of achievement tests, friendliness and approachability, understanding students’ point of view, advocate for students, promptness in responding to requests, ability to explain things clearly, reliability to keep promises, availability to students, and overall effectiveness.

Translation

The authors created all materials utilized in this study in English, and the first author then translated the documents into Mandarin Chinese. To examine translation quality, a bilingual, native Chinese speaker who was not part of the research team subsequently translated all documents back into English. The authors evaluated and considered these translated documents equivalent. This approach is consistent with common practice in research requiring translation of documents (Larkin, de Casterlé, & Schotsmans, 2007; Liu et al., 2005).

Design

Data analyses were conducted based on the four research questions in this study. First, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to learn the number of students who had sought counseling services and the frequency of their meetings with a counselor. Second, an independent t test was conducted to determine the differences between male and female students’ perceptions of their school counselors’ services. Third, another independent t test was performed to examine the differences between students’ perceptions of their school counselors’ services depending on whether or not the students had sought prior counseling services. Finally, a 2×2 between-subjects ANOVA was done to determine whether there was a statistically significant interaction effect between gender and whether or not students sought prior counseling services.

The data from students who had never had individual meetings with counselors were included in these analyses. These data were included because these students had had contact with school counselors in other circumstances (e.g., lectures, classroom guidance, school-wide gathering), even though they had not met with school counselors individually (Leuwerke & Shi, 2010).

Procedure

Five teachers at the two high schools assisted with data collection. Since research participation and the protocol were new to most of the teachers, explanation of the confidential and voluntary nature of the project was provided through teleconference. Questions from the teachers were answered via e-mail. One of the teachers in Beijing was in charge of the informed consent forms and data storage. Parents of the students in the classrooms of all five teachers received one copy of the informed consent and all granted consent for their child to participate in the research. Students then received e-mails. An online survey tool (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>) was used to administer the questionnaire.

Results

The first goal of this study was to examine how many students had sought services from school counselors and the number of meetings they had had with their school counselors since they entered high school. Descriptive statistics were obtained in order to achieve this goal. Nearly half of the participants (48.9%, $n = 67$) reported having seen counselors at least once. Among these 67 students, the majority ($n = 41$) had met once individually with a school counselor, 22 had seen a school counselor individually two to three times, and four students had talked with school counselors four to five times. No student reported having met with a school counselor more than five times. Information on the length of these individual counseling sessions was not obtained in the survey.

The second goal of this study was to examine the students' perceptions of their school counselors. Fifty-three students provided a complete evaluation of their school counselors in the survey. Among these 53 students, 36 had used counseling services before, whereas 17 reported no individual meetings with a counselor. As shown in Table 1, students' most positive ratings of their school counselors were for friendliness and approachability ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.25$) and ability to explain things clearly ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.33$). The lowest rated attributes were knowledge of college admission ($M = 1.30$, $SD = 1.42$) and knowledge of vocational information ($M = 1.10$, $SD = 1.30$).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics on Students' Evaluations of School Counseling Services

School counseling services evaluated	<i>N</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Friendliness and approachability	137	0	4	3.20	1.25
Ability to explain things clearly	137	0	4	2.99	1.33
Availability to students	137	0	4	2.77	1.38
Understanding students' points of view	138	0	4	2.73	1.32
Promptness in responding to requests	137	0	4	2.68	1.47
Reliability to keep promises	137	0	4	2.37	1.62
Advocate for students	137	0	4	2.31	1.51
Knowledge of achievement tests	137	0	4	1.82	1.44
Knowledge of college admission	141	0	4	1.30	1.42
Knowledge of vocational information	138	0	4	1.10	1.30
Overall effectiveness	137	0	4	2.51	1.40
Valid <i>N</i> (listwise)	137				

Furthermore, independent *t* tests were conducted to determine whether students' ratings of counseling services differed significantly between genders and between students who had or had not sought counseling services. A statistically significant result was found in students' ratings of school counselors' availability in the independent *t* test based on gender. Female students rated school counselors' availability significantly higher than male students did ($F = 4.196, p < .05$). Statistically significant results also were found based on whether or not the students had sought counseling services. As shown in Table 2, students who had received prior counseling services rated counselors significantly higher in the following areas than did students who had never received counseling services: knowledge of achievement tests, friendliness and approachability, understanding students' point of view, advocate for students, promptness in responding to requests, ability to explain things clearly, reliability to keep promises, availability, and overall effectiveness.

Table 2

Students' Evaluations of School Counselors Depending on Whether or Not They Seek Services

School counseling services evaluated	Levene's test ^a		<i>t</i> test ^b				
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i> difference	<i>SE</i> difference
Knowledge of college admission	.59	.443	1.84	139	.068	.46	.25
Knowledge of vocational information	.55	.460	2.22	135	.028	.51	.23
Knowledge of achievement tests	7.61	.007	1.53	134	.128	.40	.26
Friendliness and approachability	7.34	.008	2.10	135	.038	.47	.22
Understanding students' points of view	8.26	.005	2.46	136	.015	.57	.23
Advocate for students'	2.89	.092	2.50	135	.014	.67	.27
Promptness in responding to requests	18.23	.000	2.12	135	.036	.55	.26
Ability to explain things clearly	17.92	.000	2.24	135	.027	.53	.24
Reliability to keep promises	9.28	.003	2.44	135	.016	.70	.29
Availability to students	9.59	.002	2.24	135	.027	.55	.25
Overall effectiveness	39.95	.000	3.03	135	.003	.74	.25

^aLevene's test for equality of variances. ^b*t* test for equality of means.

A 2×2 between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects that gender and students' experiences with counseling services had on students' perceptions of counseling services. Levene's test and *F*max indicated that the homogeneity of variances assumption was met. A statistically significant interaction effect was found between gender and whether or not the students had received counseling services, $F(1, 133) = 5.923, p = .016$. As shown in Figure 1, the relationship between whether or not students had received counseling services and their perceptions of school counselors differed depending on gender. Among students who had had individual meetings with their counselors, males rated the counselors higher than females did, while females rated the counselors higher than males did if they had never received counseling services.

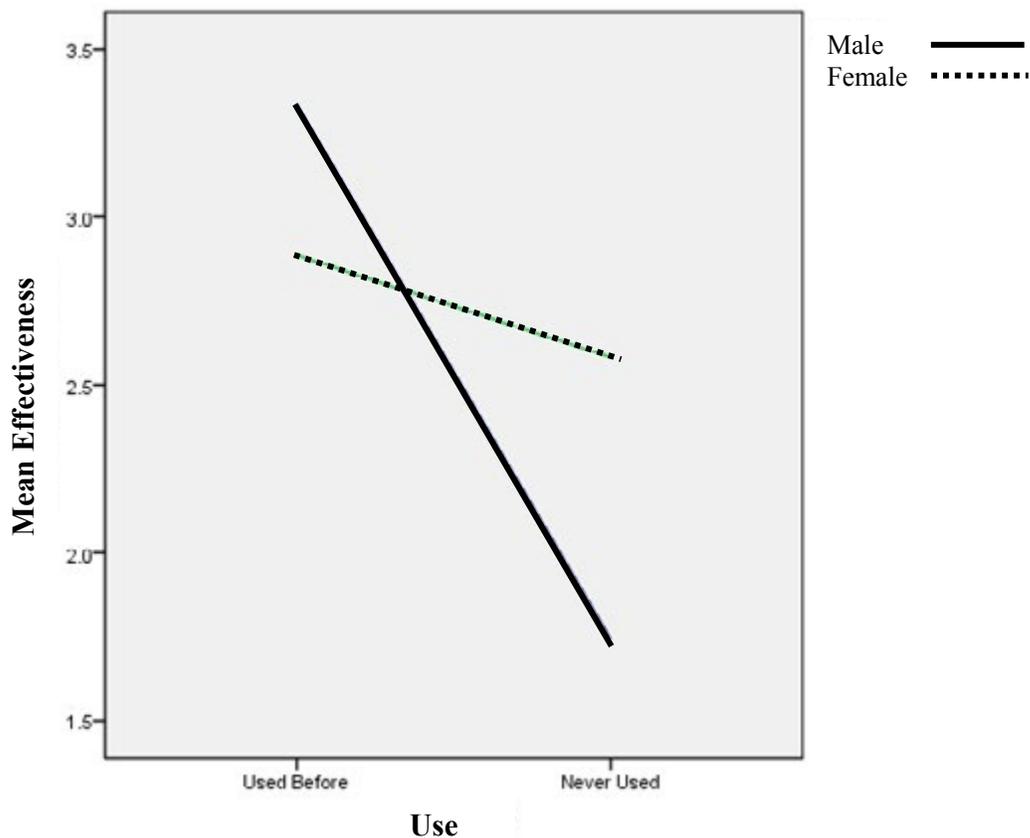


Figure 1. Mean differences on gender and whether or not students received counseling services.

Discussion

In this study, almost half of the participants reported seeking help from a school counselor at least once. Interestingly, over 60% of the students who had met with a counselor had not returned for a subsequent meeting. Although China has seen the presence of school counselors increase in urban schools, it is still not common for students to seek counseling services (Thomason & Qiong, 2008). While the specific reasons why the students discontinued meeting with school counselors in this study are not clear, the following factors might help explain this phenomenon: (a) students have been found to be most concerned with physical health and to have failed to consider other aspects of health such as mental/psychological, behavioral and social (Wang, Zou, Gifford, & Dalal, 2014); (b) stigma toward mental illness exists among Chinese students (Thomason & Qiong, 2008; Wang, Huang, Jackson, Chen, & Laks, 2012); (3) Chinese cultural beliefs promote solving family-related issues inside one's own family (Cook et al., 2010); and (4) students spend the majority of their time preparing for the National College Entrance Exam (NCEE), which Chinese school counselors perceived as an impediment to students' utilization of school counseling services and future school counseling development in China (Leuwerke & Shi, 2010).

As for the modal number of counseling sessions that school counselors hold in secondary schools in China and the United States, little is presented in the current literature. More research has been conducted on college students' attendance of counseling sessions offered by university counseling centers. For example, Draper, Jennings, Baron, Erdur, and Shankar (2002) found that, on average, college students met with counselors only three times. A number of studies have confirmed that most college students attend only a few sessions and

that 50% terminate counseling prematurely (Ledsky et al., 2000; Renk, Dinger, & Bjugstad, 2000; Whipple et al., 2003). The number of counseling sessions that school counselors have with high school students could be likewise related. Students who visit school counselors by referral normally do not return for a second session, even though more sessions are indicated (E. Zhang, personal communication, June 5, 2007).

In China's current school system, homeroom teachers have close, day-to-day interaction with students in their own homerooms; these teachers are responsible for students' behavior, academic performance, mental health and all-around development (Lim et al., 2010; Shi & Leuwerke, 2010). Homeroom teachers may refer students to school counselors if they feel that students' problems are beyond the teachers' ability to solve (E. Zhang, personal communication, June 5, 2007). Future research could help explain why students tend to meet with their counselor only one time, and could explore the factors associated with students' premature termination. It might be that Chinese counselors are giving an intentional or unintentional message that only one session is appropriate. Additional research is necessary to explore how school counselors could reach out to more students and reduce the stigma attached to mental problems, which might encourage more students to utilize individual counseling in school settings.

The descriptive results of this study provide some preliminary information about the level of students' satisfaction with particular areas. Based on the students' perceptions in two high schools in Beijing, it appears that school counselors are doing quite well in many different areas, such as friendliness and approachability to students, ability to explain things clearly, and availability. However, there are some areas in which school counselors must improve their knowledge and skills (e.g., college admission, vocational information and opportunities, achievement tests). When interpreting the results of this study, it is important to keep in mind that participants in this study are all from top-ranking high schools in Beijing, where students have a general college-going mindset and therefore place significant emphasis on academic achievement; in addition, these students have a higher expectation and interest in seeking counseling services related to applying for college. Also, in the current school systems in China, homeroom teachers are normally in charge of handling students' academic testing, disseminating college-related information and helping students prepare for college (Shi & Leuwerke, 2010). Therefore, school counselors might not be as prepared as homeroom teachers to provide information regarding college admission and achievement tests.

As for the low ratings in the area of vocational information and opportunities, it is critical to consider the fact that the practice and profession of career counseling is still in the developmental stage in China (Leuwerke & Shi, 2010; Zhang, Hu, & Pope, 2002). Unfortunately, a thorough literature search revealed no information on the current conditions of school counselors' training in China. However, a few studies have briefly mentioned the training or education that school counselors receive. For example, Gao et al. (2010) conducted a national survey on professional training experience among mental health practitioners in China, with only half of their sample working in educational settings such as high schools and universities. The researchers found that mental health practitioners reported receiving only short-term training and continuing education that focused on theories; a majority reported receiving no supervision or case consultation (Gao et al., 2010). Although there is a lack of literature on school counselors' training in particular, several authors have indicated an urgent need for a more regulated, comprehensive and standardized training and qualification system for school counselors in China (Cook et al., 2010; Leuwerke & Shi, 2010; Lim et al., 2010; Thomason & Qiong, 2008).

It was expected that students who had had individual meetings with school counselors would rate counseling services differently than the students who had never seen school counselors individually. Students who had received counseling services before rated school counselors at a significantly higher level than students who had never had counseling services in many different areas, including the school counselors' test skills,

approachability, understanding, advocacy, promptness, ability, reliability, availability and overall effectiveness in providing counseling services. This finding is not surprising, considering that students who have had personal contact with the school counselors might have a better understanding of the role of school counselors and the services they provide, and therefore are more likely to give a higher rating of school counseling services. In a study conducted in Turkey, Yüksel-Şahin (2008) also found that the factor of whether students had met with school counselors was a significant predictor of students' evaluations of counseling guidance service.

Similarly, gender differences were expected in students' rating of school counselors. The results show significantly higher ratings from female students than male students of school counselors' availability. From the descriptive results of this study, one can see that female students reported more contact with school counselors than male students did; this finding might help explain female students' higher rating of school counselors' availability.

Finally, an interaction effect was found in students' ratings of the effectiveness of their counselors in the 2×2 between-subjects ANOVA based on gender and whether or not students seek counseling services. In a 2009 study, Hou, Zhou, and Ma examined high school and university students' expectations of counseling in China. Results of their study showed that female students had significantly higher scores than males in terms of their own openness and counselors' acceptance. Meanwhile, the researchers also found that students who did not have counseling experience had significantly lower scores on their motivation compared to their counterparts. These trends continued in the current study, which further supports the idea that students' previous counseling experiences and gender relate closely to their expectations and perceptions of counselors and counseling services in general.

As a developing profession facing a huge student population, school counselors in China are doing a more than adequate job with limited resources. In the current study, most high school students reported seeking counseling services from their school counselors more than once, and they reported having generally positive experiences in counseling. Meanwhile, these students also had positive perceptions of their school counselors' services; however, they reported the need for more vocational guidance or more knowledge of achievement tests from their counselors. An interaction effect was found in students' perceptions of school counseling services based on students' gender and whether they had met with school counselors before.

Implications

This study contributes to the literature by filling a research gap in Chinese students' utilization and perceptions of school counseling. This line of inquiry is very important for the future development of the school counseling profession in China in that it provides implications for researchers and school counseling practitioners, as well as counselor educators. Future researchers could further investigate factors that might predict students' utilization of school counseling services and what students need the most from counseling. More efforts need to be made in both conducting empirical research in the school counseling field and in exploring ways to improve the profession that will suit China's cultural and social situations (Jiang, 2005; Thomason & Qiong, 2008). Moreover, the findings from this research are informative for school counseling practitioners in China. Chinese school counselors may want to self-evaluate their services and seek further training and education to improve their services in the areas that students rated lower. School counselors also could explore ways to make their services more accessible for students. Finally, the results of this research can be beneficial for counselor educators, who could contribute to improving the quality of school counselors' training and education by providing opportunities for supervision, practice and professional development courses targeting the knowledge and skills that school counselors need most.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations in this study that limit generalization and call for additional research. First, the sample in this study was a convenience sample; the majority of the participants were from one high school, also limiting the generalizability of the results. Second, the two high schools are similar to each other in that they are top-ranking high schools in Beijing, and their students have similar future plans. Therefore, the results of this study may not apply to other geographic areas in China, especially rural areas, because a difference exists in educational conditions between economically developed areas (e.g., Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou) and underdeveloped areas (e.g., rural areas in West China). Students from different geographical areas in China may encounter different mental health problems, and the development of school counseling in urban and rural China may be different (Yan, 2003). The position of school counselor may not even exist in some areas in China. Third, the sample lacks diversity in terms of gender and grade level. Most of the participants in this study were female students and senior 2 students. Gender may be a variable that influences how students perceive counseling and school counselors. Future research utilizing more diverse and larger samples from across the country will be able to provide a more detailed and general picture of school counseling in high schools across China. Lastly, the instrument used in this study was adapted from an instrument that was developed several decades ago. Although some modifications were made, the validity and reliability of the scale used for Chinese students are not clear at this time. Future studies may investigate the validity and reliability of this instrument and also develop new instruments that are specially designed to measure students' perceptions of Chinese school counselors' effectiveness, competence, expertise and contributions.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The authors reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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Identifying Gender Differences in Male and Female Anger Among an Adolescent Population



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 531–540
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/ib.4.5.531

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This pilot study explored differences between the levels of anger expression and anger control by adolescent males and females. Eighteen participants (9 males and 9 females) completed a strength-based anger management group promoting wellness. Anger management group counseling consisted of a 10-week continuous intervention emphasizing anger reduction, anger control and appropriate anger expression. Results indicated gender differences in that females exhibited more anger expression, as well as less anger control. However, females had higher levels of overall improvement. The article concludes with limitations and implications for mental health counseling with adolescent populations.

***Keywords:* mental health counseling, group counseling, anger management, adolescent, gender differences**

The profession of mental health counseling serves a diverse population with a variety of needs, including substance abuse and anger management issues (Gutierrez & Hagedorn, 2013). In order to provide services to clients, mental health counselors use a number of modalities, such as individual and group counseling. Research indicates that group counseling in particular can be useful with certain populations, such as excessively angry clients (Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013; Fleckenstein & Horne, 2004). Traditionally, anger management groups have focused on dealing with anger after it occurs. Recent developments in the field of counseling, however, suggest that a number of new trends are developing with mental health and anger management groups (Burt & Butler, 2011).

One of these trends focuses on early prevention with mental health counselors either providing facilitation or training others to facilitate anger management groups in schools (Curtis, Van Horne, Robertson, & Karvonen, 2010). The targeted clients of most of the early prevention interventions are middle and high school populations (Parker & Bickmore, 2012). Burt and Butler (2011) contended, however, that many early prevention and anger management groups are gender biased and focus excessively on adolescent males. The researchers suggested that while adolescent females experience anger as well, they often do not receive counseling services (Burt & Butler, 2011). As a result, a growing population with similar needs is potentially neglected. While numerous differences do exist between genders, anger is a common emotion experienced by both (Karreman & Bekker, 2012).

Research indicates that differences exist between adolescent males and females with regard to behavioral decision-making processes and expression of emotions (Brandts & Garofalo, 2012). Although research depicts females as more emotionally expressive, males have a reputation of being more predisposed to anger. According to Sadeh, Javdani, Finy, and Verona (2011), females experience anger, but may express it differently than males. For example, instead of expressing anger by striking objects, adolescent females may talk to friends or

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peers (Fischer & Evers, 2011). Conversely, other studies purport that females express anger similarly to males, but experience difficulty recognizing and admitting the emotion due to social expectations and constraints (Karreman & Bekker, 2012). Males, on the other hand, tend to display anger more commonly and comfortably (Fischer & Evers, 2011). One of the many reasons that adolescent males may feel comfortable expressing anger is because it is socially acceptable (Burt et al., 2013).

An extensive number of studies have investigated anger; however, there appears to be a lack of studies exploring anger differences between genders. Karreman and Bekker (2012) conducted a study on gender differences, investigating autonomy-connectedness between genders. Their study indicated differences related to anger and sensitivity between genders. However, the study did not attempt to determine whether males and females were equal in anger at the beginning or end of the study. Similarly, Burt, Patel, and Lewis (2012) reported that incorporating social and relational competencies into anger management groups reduced anger, but there was no discussion of anger differences between genders. Sadeh et al. (2011) indicated that women expressed more self-anger (i.e., anger directed internally toward themselves) than males, but did not investigate whether differences existed between genders before the study.

Although limited, a small number of studies have attempted to examine anger differences between genders. Similar to Sadeh et al. (2011), Fischer & Evers (2011) found that females expressed subjective anger, or self-anger, more often than males. Buntaine and Costenbader (1997) found that both genders' self-reports (assessments) indicated no significant differences. Upon further examination of their data, however, they concluded that although self-reports specified no differences, males verbally reported higher responses of anger. In contrast, Zimprich and Mascherek (2012) determined that no anger differences existed between males and females. They declared that although genders may express anger and respond to situations differently, they generally experience similar levels of anger. As can be seen from the preceding studies, inconsistencies exist in the literature. Contradicting studies indicate that researchers are unclear as to whether differences in anger exist between genders. As such, a research gap has emerged that needs to be filled (Zimprich & Mascherek, 2012). In order to understand how this research gap developed, it is necessary to examine cultural influences.

Cultural Influences and Misconceptions in Society

According to Carney, Buttell, and Dutton (2007), a misconception exists in Western society that women are less aggressive than men and do not express excessive anger. This fallacy persisted in Western culture until a report from the U.S. National Family Violence Survey of 1975 (as cited in Carney et al., 2007) found a disturbing trend: Females were just as angry as males and expressed excessive anger the same amount that men did. At the time, feminist theory and the feminist movement were developing and stood in stark contrast to these findings. Carney et al. (2007) stated that as such, the National Family Violence Survey findings were largely unreported, and in extreme situations, people reinterpreted or repudiated the survey's findings. In either case, more misconceptions began to develop in Western culture (Carney et al., 2007), such as the idea that when females experience anger, it is always appropriate to the situation (i.e., anger is permissible). A second mistaken belief is that anger from females is less serious and not as negative. For example, the expression "you look so cute when you're angry" portrays this biased and potentially chauvinistic thought. A third misconception is that females are more credible in reporting their emotions and, as such, females are more reliable when they state that they are not angry.

Western society has acted upon these cultural misconceptions. For example, certain myths in society (and mental health counseling) persist, declaring the following: (a) only males have angry feelings, (b) all male-comprised counseling groups are anger management groups, (c) males have a limited repertoire of emotions

to express, (d) males are too angry and competitive to support one another in groups, and (e) males are not interested in meeting with other males (Andronico & Horne, 2004). Myths about female groups are that they are high functioning, conflicts are resolved faster, and a fair amount of reflection and processing exists (Gladding, 2012). According to researchers, these misconceptions can bias the truth regarding people's beliefs. For example, Winstok (2011) stated that rates of excessive anger and intimate partner physical abuse among females equal or surpass those of males.

Clearly, cultural misconceptions of gender differences in excessive anger can lead mental health counselors to do a disservice to males and females alike. For example, culture can influence mental health and group counseling by causing a *type* to develop. This type is defined as best suited to be in anger management groups. As a result, mental health counselors may unconsciously choose more males than females to be members of anger management groups. Thus, a population that desperately needs services can go without an intervention (Carney et al., 2007). Mental health counselors need to reevaluate their thinking in order to avoid overlooking a population needing services due to implicit social misconceptions.

Bandura (2008a) believed that excessive anger was not sudden, but gradually manifested over time. His studies with youth corroborated this idea, as he observed modeling and negative behavioral patterns leads to excessive anger (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963). Supporting Bandura's work, Burt and Butler (2011) asserted that excessive anger begins in childhood and adolescence. They reinforced the notion that mental health counselors must be aware that both genders have common needs and issues. For females, not receiving services or having services denied, and being told that the emotion they feel is inappropriate, could cause personal damage (Gottfredson, 2002). For instance, society and mental health counselors often depict males as more in need of anger management (Burt & Butler, 2011). Conversely, mental health counselors sometimes neglect and ignore what females need (West-Olatunji et al., 2010). Stated succinctly, a gap exists between what clients need and the options mental health counseling interventions offer to both genders. It is the author's contention that this gap is an unfair practice, as both genders have similar needs. Research has shown that males and females experience anger equally; as a result, both need anger management groups.

To determine whether both genders expressed anger similarly, the author implemented a pilot study with adolescents to explore the topic before proceeding with a full investigation. As Bandura (2008b) pointed out, anger begins early in life and timely prevention is critical. Provision of early services for children and adolescents can help to prevent issues later in life.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were male and female middle school students in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades. Thirty potential participants (15 males and 15 females) received invitations for participation, and 20 returned signed parental informed consent forms (10 males and 10 females). Ages of participants ranged from 11–14 years and consisted of 75% Latino/Hispanic (15), 15% Black (3), and 10% White (2). Two participants did not complete the study.

Instrumentation

This pilot study used the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory-2 Child and Adolescent (STAXI-2 C/A). A well-known and highly used instrument, the STAXI-2 C/A is a self-report assessment that indicates youths' (ages 9–18) control and expression of their anger (Spielberger, 1999). The STAXI-2 C/A has provided reliable and consistent results across diverse cultures and settings (Chirichella-Besemer & Motta, 2008). The

STAXI-2 C/A contains four scales assessing excessive anger in youths. The four scales are as follows: Anger State (S-Ang), Anger Trait (T-Ang), Anger Control (AC) and Anger Expression (AX). Each of the four scales measures a different indicator of anger, in order to provide counselors with a multifaceted perspective of the client's anger behavior.

Past studies that utilized the STAXI-2 C/A focused on AC and AX because of the strong validity these scales have with other anger assessments (Freeman, 2004); thus, the AC and AX scales were used in this pilot study. Cronbach's alphas were .92 and .67 for AC and AX respectively (Freeman, 2004). Barrio, Aluja, and Spielberger (2004) stated that Cronbach's alphas demonstrated by the STAXI-2 C/A indicated a high degree of reliability. Additionally, Barrio et al. (2004) also exhibited high construct validity by correlating the STAXI-2 C/A with the Verbal and Physical Aggressiveness Scale (AFV; Caprara & Pastorelli, 1993). A significant correlation of .43 existed between the two assessments. According to Gladding (2012), numerous counselors fail to measure the successfulness of their groups accurately because of errors in measurement and evaluation. In groups, a large number of therapeutic factors are occurring, which affect members in varying ways (Corey, 2011). Focusing on too many factors can overwhelm counselors and undermine evaluation, which is critically important (Gladding, 2012). In order to avoid this potential problem, this pilot study focused on a limited number of factors.

Procedures

A large, urban public middle school in a metropolitan area provided the setting and participants for this pilot study. Serving 2,000 students in grades 6–8, the school has a standardized documentation system that keeps track of behavioral disruptions. The documentation system records in-school suspensions (ISS), out-of-school suspensions (OSS) and behavioral infractions for students (Burt, 2010). Each student has a personal identification number; the administration connects student infractions to these numbers in order to identify any student. The documentation system also contains a small description of what caused the issue. For instance, some students have behavioral outbursts of anger, while others have infractions for tardiness. Since the focus of this pilot was to determine anger differences between genders, it was imperative for the study to have participants who displayed excessive anger. To increase validity and correctly identify participants, the author used school administration recommendations.

The author conducted interviews with school staff to gather information as suggested by Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, and Moore-Thomas (2012). For example, the author asked school deans, teachers and professional school counselors (PSC) for recommendations about students. Many students had a high overall number of OSS and ISS, including a large number of behavioral infractions. However, some infractions were due to nonexcessive anger problems (e.g., tardiness). School staff could provide a safeguard against the author inappropriately recruiting a student who did not truly require services. The author asked school staff if a student's number of OSS, ISS and infractions corresponded with actual behavior (i.e., excessive anger). Thus, the goal was to eliminate as much bias as possible to ensure the most appropriate candidates.

After interviewing school staff, a pool of candidates emerged, consisting of individuals with documentation of excessive anger, fights and legal procedures in the court system (Burt, 2010). School staff considered these candidates to be at high risk for excessive anger, and candidates' records of OSS, ISS and behavioral infractions corroborated this belief. According to Burt et al. (2013), more than eight occurrences in a 12-week period constitute a high number of anger issues; thus, this study held the same parameters advocated by Burt et al. (2013). Once a list of eligible candidates emerged, the author interviewed school staff a second time. This second short interview was a safeguard measure before actually contacting candidates. The author wanted to meet with school staff again to reduce potential staff bias and ensure that candidates were still having anger issues. After the last interview, school staff explained the study to candidates in detail.

In order to increase client buy-in, school staff introduced the author of this article (who was also the group facilitator) to candidates. The author met with candidates and explained the study in more detail, in addition to answering any questions. If the candidates were interested in participating, the author gave them informed consent forms to have their parents sign. To increase the likelihood of the candidates returning the informed consent forms, candidates received tokens from the school, which allowed them to buy goods in the school store. If candidates returned signed informed consent forms, they received five tokens, comparable to five U.S. dollars. Out of 30 candidates, 20 returned signed informed consent forms. Although this is a small number, this quantity is permissible for pilot studies (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). The author split the participants in half based on gender (10 males and 10 females). One participant dropped out of each group, leaving 18 who completed the study. Each group met at a different time and was not aware of the existence of the other group (Burt, 2010). This pilot study assessed participants' behavior via the STAXI-2 C/A, given pre- and post-intervention.

Structure of the intervention/anger management group used in the pilot study. The anger management group consisted of eight counseling sessions and two assessment sessions (pretest and posttest assessment; Burt, 2010). Program duration was 10 weeks, and the author of this article conducted each session weekly. Corresponding with Blanton, Christensen, and Shakir (2006), each counseling session contained the following four essential components: an opening question (such as an icebreaker or introductory segment), a behavioral lesson (information gathering and learning), a behavioral activity (an experiential segment in which learned information is applied), and an appreciations and closings segment ending the group (a bonding piece for group members). Counseling sessions concluded after 60 minutes, with opening questions lasting approximately 5–10 minutes. Behavioral lessons took between 10 and 25 minutes and behavioral activities lasted 15–30 minutes. Appreciations and closing concluded after 5–10 minutes. Pre- and post-group paperwork sessions took approximately 15–30 minutes (Burt, 2010). As Burt et al. (2012) suggested, groups must be strength-based (i.e., accentuating members' strong points), and incorporate collaboration and teamwork. The group was prosocial in nature, emphasized clients' strengths and developed social bonding. Topics for the eight sessions included the following: improving communication skills, recognizing personal emotions, identifying emotions within others, improving observational skills, advanced detection of emotions in others, noticing anger cues in others, understanding personal anger cues, strategies for calming down, and problem-solving.

Mental health counselor for the intervention. The mental health counselor for both groups was this author, who has experience as a group facilitator and counselor educator. Additionally, the author worked as a training liaison for anger management groups in the school system, teaching conflict resolution and peer mediation. He also has experience working with groups for adults and children with oppositional defiance disorder and anger management issues. The group facilitator used an integrative orientation, utilizing social cognitive theory (SCT) and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT; Burt, 2010).

Results

The focus of the study was to determine whether differences existed between male and female levels of excessive aggression. Table 1 displays descriptive statistics and indicates results from the one-way repeated measures ANOVA for AC and AX. Results for youths' overall AC levels pre- and post-intervention indicated the following, $F(1, 8) = 6.36, p = .003, ES = .44$. Thus, the pilot study showed preliminary findings that a significant difference existed between genders on AC. For the scale of AX, results indicated a statistically significant difference between genders pre- and post-intervention ($F(1, 8) = 4.06, p = .018, ES = .34$). Although repeated measures indicated a statistically significant difference between genders, pair-wise comparisons

allowed examination of exactly where differences lay between genders on AC and AX. Thus, a significant difference existed between gender on AC ($p = .04$), and on AX (.03; Table 1). At the beginning of the pilot study, males had less AC, but females had more AX. However, females had the larger increase in AC post-intervention, as well as the greatest reduction in AX between genders. Hence, females had the greater overall gains and improvement pre- and post-intervention as opposed to males.

Table 1

Outcome results for Anger Control and Anger Expression

	Pretest				Posttest					
	Males	Females	df	P	F	ES	Males	Females	df	P
	M (SD)	M (SD)					M (SD)	M (SD)		
Repeated Measures ANOVA ^a										
Anger Control	44.22 (12.76)	51.56 (4.33)	8	.003	6.36	.44	50.00 (14.00)	63.33 (7.85)	8	
Anger Expression	18.78 (5.58)	24.67 (3.87)	8	.018	4.06	.34	17.44 (5.50)	20.67 (2.74)	8	
Pair-Wise Comparisons ^b				.04						.03

Note. ^a $N = 9$ ^b $N = 18$

Discussion

Females had more AX than males, a finding which corresponds with Cross and Campbell (2011). Males appeared to have less AC and were somewhat less angry than females. A number of studies support the preceding findings, most notably Winstok (2011) and Carney et al. (2007). Further, this pilot's findings corroborate the idea that both genders have equal problems with excessive anger (Carney et al., 2007). The results from this study also suggest that both genders can improve with interventions designed to address anger. According to Winstok (2011), a common misconception is that males have greater need for excessive anger interventions than females. However, in this pilot study, females responded better to the treatment than males did. This responsiveness to treatment is interesting in that few studies have directly compared sensitivity to interventions by gender. While sensitivity to treatment was not a focal point of this pilot, it is interesting to note and direct attention to this unexpected outcome.

The author believes that the primary underlying reason females responded better to the treatment is that they are an underserved population (West-Olatunji et al., 2010). This is not to say that other explanations are not contributing factors, but because the females in this study possibly represent an underserved population, the aforementioned factor likely has more influence. According to West-Olatunji (2010), an underserved population is one that needs services, but does not have access to help. In addition, a number of the females in this pilot qualify as an underserved population as defined by Burt and Butler (2011). For instance, background information provided by the school indicated that approximately 85% of males in this pilot study received prior services (e.g., counseling) before participating. Conversely, 40% of females in this pilot study received prior services. Although the purpose of this study was not to detail what causes an underserved population to develop, research indicates that it can be due to institutional, social or cultural constraints (West-Olatunji et al., 2010).

While this study did not use qualitative measures as advocated by McCarthy (2012), females verbally disclosed that the school rarely offers them anger management services. Female participants further stated that if those services were more readily available, they would use them. Conversely, males indicated being overwhelmed with staff attempting to persuade them to participate in anger management services. This dichotomy in access to treatment clearly marks the identification of an underserved population. Thus, the females' higher responsiveness to the intervention is potentially due to the following: Perhaps this study was a first intervention for many of the female participants. For females who did receive prior services, it may have been the first intervention directly dealing with anger.

Day (2008) indicated three characteristics that clients need to increase the likelihood of a successful outcome: the client must be in distress, must actively seek help and must have high expectations for counseling. The female participants (as opposed to the majority of the males) in this study met the preceding three criteria. Members of both genders were in a state of distress (as evidenced by the school's documentation system). However, females verbally admitted to wanting help and had higher expectations. Consequently, females in the pilot had larger, more consistent gains. As evidenced by West-Olatunji et al. (2010), when underserved populations receive desired treatments, the change is normally larger than average. Thus, the findings in this pilot study connect to previous research and provide a plausible reason for the differences between genders.

Limitations

This pilot study had limitations stemming from research methods. First, the groups were limited to one school, as well as to selection from a standardized school documentation system (Burt, 2010). The documentation system compiled an objective list of behavior issues in school, but did not differentiate between excessively angry and nonexcessively angry behaviors. For example, documented behaviors could range from threatening school staff to not returning school forms promptly. To account for this issue, this study included school staff and administration's professional suggestions for possible candidates. However, school staff may have had subtle biases for or against certain students. There are limitations to each method of selection, including both the standardized documentation system and the school staff. An additional limitation is that the same mental health counselor (the author of this article) conducted the groups. Due to this limitation, some participants' changes may be due to the facilitator's style or personality. More importantly, this study lacked a control group and had a small number of participants. The lack of a control group makes generalizations difficult in that it is uncertain whether other extraneous variables influenced the results. Having a small number of participants decreases the power of the pilot study and makes it difficult to generalize results. However, the fact that a significant finding occurred with a small sample size indicates the strong influence of the intervention (Gay & Airasian, 2003). In schools, it is difficult to conduct full-scale studies due to a number of preexisting conditions, such as high-stakes testing (Burt et al., 2013). Therefore, having a study without a control group and with a small number of participants may be the most appropriate method if investigators are to conduct research in schools (Heppner et al., 2008).

Implications and Future Directions for Research

Implications for mental health counselors stemming from this pilot study are numerous. First, mental health counselors must be aware that both genders need services for excessive anger. Mental health counselors should not allow personal biases and media influences to sway professional opinion (Gladding, 2012). In addition, mental health counselors must advocate for fairness and oppose stereotyped biases and ideologies pushed by society (Burt et al., 2012). According to Gray and Rose (2012), discrimination and internalized oppression begin by ignoring discriminatory societal practices. Only by remaining reflective and cognizant of personal

biases can mental health counselors reduce problematic issues and model appropriate behaviors (Young, 2012).

A second implication for mental health counselors is to understand that a strength-based model promoting wellness is critically important for clients (Hagedorn & Hirshhorn, 2009). Specific populations, such as youth, respond better to models incorporating empowerment, which can lead to increased behavioral self-efficacy (Bandura, 2008a). Furthermore, positive modeling by mental health counselors also increases growth and behavioral self-efficacy (Bandura, 2008a). A combination of strength-based approaches, empowerment and modeling improve groups' interpersonal, intrapersonal and extrapersonal functioning (Gladding, 2012). Third, mental health counselors should seek to improve delivery of services and outcomes by evaluating the group process (Steen, 2011). For instance, Gladding (2012) and McCarthy (2012) reinforced the notion of improving counseling services through research and evaluation. This study provided a formal assessment of a group that could have otherwise gone unreported.

Future researchers may want to improve the overall research design. For example, researchers could include a larger number of participants, groups and multiple facilitators. Moreover, future studies must have a true experimental design, such as a control group with random assignment. Including participants' personal perspectives and phenomenological views not only increases the validity of research, it improves mental health counselors' skill levels as well (Gladding, 2012). Qualitative measures improve skill level by giving mental health counselors a clear idea of what actually worked and what did not (Burt & Butler, 2011). Lastly, future researchers may want to pay more attention to gender responsiveness (sensitivity) to treatments, to determine if males or females respond better to specific treatments.

Conclusion

The purpose of this pilot study was to determine whether gender differences existed among adolescents for excessive anger. Preliminary results indicate that differences existed, but that there also were distinctions between genders regarding the intervention itself. Females had better AC, but also had more AX compared to their male counterparts. However, females seemed to respond better to the intervention, as shown by their larger gains and improvement. Males improved as well, but did not have the substantial progress observed in females. While past research may not have lent strong support for gender differences, this author hoped to reinvigorate interest in gender discrepancies. Females are an underserved population with regard to anger management; research has indicated that they experience anger sometimes at a rate paralleling or surpassing males (Cross & Campbell, 2011). However, due to societal stigma and cultural biases, many females do not receive anger management services. Therefore, only rigorous research can determine whether these problems truly exist by improving group research and outcomes (McCarthy, 2012).

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The author reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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Convergent and Divergent Validity of the Student Engagement in School Success Skills Survey



The Professional Counselor
Volume 4, Issue 5, Pages 541–552
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
© 2014 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates
doi:10.15241/ev.4.5.541

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This study examines the convergent validity and divergent validity of the Student Engagement in School Success Skills (SESSS) survey. The SESSS is easy to administer (it takes fewer than 15 minutes to complete) and is used in schools to provide educators with useful information about students' use of skills and strategies related to school success. A total of 4,342 fifth graders completed the SESSS; the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) Cognitive Strategy Use, Self-Regulation, Self-Efficacy and Test Anxiety subscales; and the Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning (SESRL). The three subscales of the SESSS (Self-Direction of Learning, Support of Classmates' Learning and Self-Regulation of Arousal) correlated highly with the MSLQ Cognitive Strategy Use and Self-Regulation subscales, moderately correlated with the Self-Efficacy subscale and the SESRL, and did not correlate with the MSLQ Test Anxiety subscale. Future research is needed to use the SESSS subscales as discriminable dimensions.

***Keywords:* school success, convergent validity, divergent validity, Student Engagement in School Success Skills survey, educators**

For more than a decade, researchers have placed increased emphasis on evidence-based practice and a programmatic approach to school counseling (Carey, 2004; Green & Keys, 2001; Gysbers, 2004; Lapan, 2005; Myrick, 2003; Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Whiston, 2002, 2011). This emphasis from the school counseling profession reflects national initiatives. In 2001, the Institute of Education Sciences, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education, was established to determine, through rigorous and relevant research, what interventions are effective and ineffective for improving student achievement and education outcomes. The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), an initiative of the Institute of Education Sciences, was created in 2002 to identify studies that provide credible and reliable evidence of the effectiveness of education interventions. The purpose of WWC is to inform researchers, educators and policymakers of interventions designed to improve student outcomes.

The American School Counselor Association's (ASCA, 2005) response to emerging national policy and initiatives included a call for school counselor-led interventions that contribute to increased student achievement as part of a comprehensive school counseling program. The need for more research to identify evidence-based

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interventions tying school counselors to improved student academic performance also surfaced in a school counseling Delphi study, which identified the most pressing research questions in the profession (Dimmitt, Carey, McGannon, & Henningson, 2005). The top priority cited by this Delphi study was the need to determine which school counseling interventions resulted in the greatest student achievement gains. In addition, five major reviews of school counseling research all discussed the need for more research to strengthen the link between school counselor interventions and student achievement (Brown & Trusty, 2005; Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Whiston & Quinby, 2009; Whiston & Sexton, 1998; Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder, 2011). However, researchers continue to report limitations in the school counseling outcome research. Among the limitations are conclusions drawn from studies based on nonstandardized outcome assessments. For instance, in a review of school counseling studies, Brown and Trusty (2005) concluded that school counseling research has been limited by the lack of valid and reliable instruments that measure the skills, strategies and personal attributes associated with academic and social/relationship success. More recently, Whiston et al. (2011) completed a meta-analytic examination of school counseling interventions and also determined the dominance of nonstandardized outcome assessments in school counseling research as a significant limitation. These limitations continue to be a hindrance for the school counseling profession, given the goal of establishing evidence-based practices that link school counselor interventions to improved student outcomes. The current WWC's Procedures and Standards Handbook (WWC, 2011) includes review procedures for evaluating studies that determine a particular intervention to be effective in improving student outcomes. The handbook provides nine reasons why a study under review would fail to meet WWC standards for rigorous research. Among the reasons is a failure to use reliable and valid outcome measures.

While a few valid instruments have recently been developed to measure school counseling outcomes (Scarborough, 2005; Sink & Spencer, 2007; Whiston & Aricak, 2008), they do not measure student changes in knowledge and skills related to academic achievement. The Student Engagement in School Success Skills survey (SESSS; Carey, Brigman, Webb, Villares, & Harrington, 2013) was developed to measure student use of the skills and strategies that were (a) identified as most critical for long-term school success and (b) could be taught by school counselors within the scope of the ASCA National Model, through classroom guidance. The importance of continuing to evaluate the psychometric properties of the SESSS lies in the fact that, for school counselors, there has typically been no standardized way to measure these types of outcomes and tie them directly to school counselor interventions. Previous studies on self-report measures of student metacognition indicate that it is feasible to develop such a measure for elementary-level students (Sperling, Howard, Miller, & Murphy, 2002; Yildiz, Akpınar, Tatar, & Ergin, 2009). The foundational concepts, skills and strategies of metacognition as well as the social skills and self-management skills taught in the Student Success Skills (SSS) program are developmentally appropriate for grades 4–10. The questions for the SESSS were developed to parallel these key strategies and skills taught in the SSS program. The instrument was tested for readability and is appropriate for grade 4 and above.

The SESSS is a self-report measure of students' use of key skills and strategies that have been identified consistently over several decades as critically important to student success in school, as noted in large reviews of educational research literature (Hattie, Biggs, & Purdie, 1996; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994a). Three skill sets have emerged from this research literature as common threads in contributing to student academic success and social competence: (a) cognitive and metacognitive skills such as goal setting, progress monitoring and memory skills; (b) social skills such as interpersonal skills, social problem solving, listening and teamwork skills; and (c) self-management skills such as managing attention, motivation and anger (Villares, Frain, Brigman, Webb, & Peluso, 2012). Additional research in support of these skills and strategies continues to weave a coherent research tapestry that is useful in separating successful students from students at risk of academic failure (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Greenberg et al., 2003; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004).

Linking school counseling programs and interventions to improved student outcomes has become increasingly important (Carey et al., 2013). One way for school counselors to demonstrate the impact of classroom guidance and small group counseling on achievement is by measuring the impact of their interventions on intermediate variables associated with achievement. These intermediate variables include the previously mentioned skills and strategies involving cognitive, social and self-management. Instruments that measure these critically important fundamental learning skills and strategies are limited.

The present article explores the convergent and divergent validity of the SESSS (Carey et al., 2013). The article builds upon previous research describing the item development of the SESSS and exploratory factor analysis (Carey et al., 2013) and a recently completed confirmatory factor analysis (Brigman et al., 2014). The current findings contribute to the establishment of the SESSS as a valid instrument for measuring the impact of school counselor-led interventions on intermediate variables associated with improved student achievement.

Method

The data collected on the SESSS occurred within the context of a multiyear, large-scale, randomized control trial funded through the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. The purpose of the grant was to investigate the effectiveness of the SSS program (Brigman & Webb, 2010) with fifth graders from two large school districts (Webb, Brigman, Carey, & Villares, 2011). In order to guard against researcher bias, the authors hired data collectors to administer the SESSS, Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) and Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning (SESRL), and standardized the training and data collection process. The authors selected these particular surveys because they reflected factors known to be related to effective learning in different ways and because they provided a range of measures, some of which were theoretically related to the SESSS and some of which were not.

Procedures

During the 2011–2012 academic year, graduate students who were enrolled in master's-level Counselor Education programs at two universities were hired and trained in a one-day workshop to administer the SESSS, MSLQ and SESRL and handle data collection materials. At the training, each data collector was assigned to five of the 60 schools across two school districts. After obtaining approvals from the university institutional review board and school district, the research team members notified parents of fifth-grade students of the study via district call-home systems and sent a letter home explaining the study, risks, benefits, voluntary nature of the study and directions on how to decline participation. One month later, data collectors entered their assigned schools and participating classrooms to administer the study instruments. Prior to administering the instruments, each data collector read aloud the student assent. Students who gave their assent were instructed to place a precoded generic label at the top of their instrument, and then each data collector read aloud the directions, along with each item and possible response choice on the SESSS, MSLQ and SESRL. Each assigned data collector was responsible for distributing, collecting and returning all the completed instruments to a district project coordinator once the data collector left the school building according to the Survey Data Collection Manual. In addition, the data collector noted any student absences and/or irregularities, and confirmed that all procedures were followed.

The district project coordinators were responsible for verifying that all materials were returned and secured in a locked cabinet until they were ready to be shipped to a partner university for data analysis. The coordinators gathered demographic information from the district databases and matched it to the participating fifth-grade students and the precoded instrument labels through a generic coding system (district #1–2, school #1–30, classroom #1–6, student #1–25). The coordinators then saved the demographic information in a password-protected and encrypted Excel spreadsheet on an external device and shipped it to a partner university for data analysis.

Participants

A total of 4,342 fifth-grade students in two large school districts completed the SESSS. The following is the demographic profile of the total participants: (a) gender = 2,150 (49.52%) female and 2,192 (50.48%) male; (b) ethnicity = 149 (3.43%) Asian, 1,502 (34.59%) Black, 865 (19.92%) Hispanic, 18 (.42%) Native American, 125 (2.88%) Multiracial, 1,682 (38.74%) White, and 1 (.02%) no response; (c) socioeconomic status = 1,999 (46.04%) noneconomically disadvantaged and 2,343 (53.96%) economically disadvantaged; (d) disability = 3,677 (84.68%) nondisabled and 665 (15.32%) disabled; (e) 504 status = 4,155 (95.70%) non-504 and 187 504 (4.3%); and (f) English language learners (ELL) = 3,999 (92.1%) non-ELL and 343 (7.9%) ELL students. Demographic information for fifth-grade students in each school district is reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Fifth-Grade Student Participant Demographics by School District

Demographic Characteristics		District 1 (<i>n</i> = 2,162)	District 2 (<i>n</i> = 2,180)
Gender	Female	1,080 (49.90%)	1,070 (49.10%)
	Male	1,082 (50.10%)	1,110 (50.90%)
Ethnicity	Asian	89 (04.12%)	60 (02.75%)
	Black	899 (41.58%)	603 (27.66%)
	Hispanic	165 (07.63%)	700 (32.11%)
	Native American	7 (00.32%)	11 (00.50%)
	Multiracial	64 (02.95%)	61 (02.80%)
	White	938 (43.40%)	744 (34.13%)
	No response	----	1 (00.05%)
SES	Non-economically disadvantaged	1,118 (51.71%)	881 (40.41%)
	Economically disadvantaged	1,044 (48.29%)	1,299 (59.59%)
Disability	Nondisabled	1,847 (85.43%)	1,830 (83.94%)
	Disabled	315 (14.57%)	350 (16.06%)
504 Status	Non-504	2,108 (97.50%)	2,047 (93.90%)
	504	54 (02.50%)	133 (06.10%)
English language learners	Non-ELL	1,968 (91.03%)	2,031 (93.17%)
	ELL	194 (08.97%)	149 (06.83%)

Note. *n* = number of students enrolled in the district; SES = socioeconomic status; ELL = English language learners.

Instruments

Student Engagement in School Success Skills. The SESSS (Carey et al., 2013) was developed to measure the extent to which students use the specific strategies that researchers have shown relate to enhanced academic achievement (Hattie et al., 1996; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Wang et al., 1994b). Survey items were written to assess students' cognitive and metacognitive skills (e.g., goal setting, progress monitoring, memory skills), social skills (e.g., communication skills, social problem solving, listening, teamwork skills) and self-management skills (e.g., managing attention, motivation, anger). After the initial pool of items was developed, items were reviewed by an expert panel of elementary educators and school counselors and subjected to a readability analysis using the Lexile Framework for Reading system (MetaMetrics, 2012). At each stage of review, minor changes were made to improve clarity on several items.

Twenty-seven self-report items (plus six additional items used to control for response set) were assembled into a scale with the following directions: “Below is a list of things that some students do to help themselves do better in school. No one does all these things. No one does any of these things all the time. Please think back over the last two weeks and indicate how often you did each of these things in the last two weeks. Please follow along as each statement is read and circle the answer that indicates what you really did. Please do your best to be as accurate as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. We will not share your answers with your parents or teachers. We will not grade your answers.”

The response format included four options that reflected frequency of strategy use in the last two weeks: “I didn’t do this at all,” “I did this once,” “I did this two times” and “I did this three or more times.” This response format was not conducive to writing clear negatively worded items; therefore, six additional items were developed to help control for response set. Three of these additional items reflected strategies that elementary students were unlikely to use (e.g., searching the Internet for additional math problems to complete). Three items reflected strategies that elementary students were likely to use (e.g., asking a friend when homework was due), but they were not covered in the SSS program.

Based on a previous administration of the SESSS to 262 elementary students in the fourth through eighth grades, Carey et al. (2013) reported an overall alpha coefficient for reliability for the 27-item scale to be .91, and coefficient alphas for each grade ranged between .87 (for fifth grade) and .95 (for seventh grade). All items correlated well with the total scale (ranging between .34 and .63). Scores on the total scale were distributed approximately normally: $M = 65.83$, $SD = 15.44$.

In addition, Carey et al., (2013) found in an exploratory factor analysis of the SESSS scores of 402 fourth through sixth graders that a four-factor solution provided the best model of scale dimensionality, considering both the solution’s clean factor structure and the interpretability of these factors. These four factors reflected students’ Self-Management of Learning, Application of Learning Strategies, Support of Classmates’ Learning and Self-Regulation of Arousal. Regarding the SESSS factors, Self-Management of Learning and Application of Learning Strategies related closely to the categories of cognitive skills, metacognitive skills and the intentional self-regulation of cognitive processes. Support of Classmates’ Learning related closely to social skills that support classroom learning. Self-Regulation of Arousal related to the self-management of arousal and emotion that can interfere with effective learning. While determining the actual associations of SESSS factors with specific, previously established constructs requires empirical study, it is encouraging that the factor structure determined in this research corresponded with previous research.

In a confirmatory factor analysis study (Brigman et al., 2014), using SESSS scores from a diverse sample of almost 4,000 fifth-grade students, who found that while a four-factor model fit the data well, the scales associated with Self-Management of Learning and Application of Learning Strategies correlated so highly ($r = .90$) as to be indiscriminate. These items associated with the two factors were combined, and the subsequent three-factor model also proved to better fit the data. Brigman et al. (2014) suggested that the SESSS is best thought of as having three underlying factors corresponding to Self-Direction of Learning (which represents the combination of the original Management of Learning and Application of Learning Strategies factors), Support of Classmates’ Learning and Self-Regulation of Arousal.

Based on factor loadings, Brigman et al. (2014) created three SESSS subscales. The Self-Direction of Learning subscale (19 items) reflects the students’ intentional use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to promote their own learning. Typical items include the following: “After I failed to reach a goal, I told myself to try a new strategy and not to doubt my ability,” and “I tried to keep myself motivated by imagining what it would be like to achieve an important goal.” The Support of Classmates’ Learning subscale (six items)

reflects the students' intentional use of strategies to help classmates learn effectively. Typical items include the following: "I tried to help a classmate learn how to do something that was difficult for them to do," and "I tried to encourage a classmate who was having a hard time doing something." Finally, the Self-Regulation of Arousal subscale (three items) reflects students' intentional use of strategies to control disabling anxiety and cope with stress. Typical items include the following: "I focused on slowing my breathing so I would feel less stressed," and "I imagined being in a calm place in order to feel less stressed."

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire. The MSLQ is a 55-item, student self-report instrument with five subscales that measure different aspects of students' motivation, emotion, effort and strategy use (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). The different subscales of the MSLQ are designed to be used singly or in combination to fit the needs of a researcher (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005). Items were adapted from various instruments used to assess student motivation, cognitive strategy use and metacognition (e.g., Eccles, 1983; Harter, 1981; Weinstein, Schulte, & Palmer, 1987). The present study used the following four subscales of the MSLQ: Cognitive Strategy Use, Self-Regulation, Self-Efficacy and Test Anxiety.

The Cognitive Strategy Use subscale is composed of 13 items that reflect the use of different types of cognitive strategies (e.g., rehearsal, elaboration, organizational strategies) to support learning. Typical items include the following: "When I read material for class, I say the words over and over to myself to help me remember," "When I study, I put important ideas into my own words" and "I outline the chapters in my book to help me study." Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) reported that the Cognitive Strategy Use subscale is reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .83).

The Self-Regulation subscale includes nine items that reflect metacognitive and effort management strategies that support learning. Typical items include the following: "I ask myself questions to make sure I know the material I have been studying" and "Even when study materials are boring I keep working until I finish." Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) reported that the Self-Regulation subscale is reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .74).

The Self-Efficacy subscale is composed of nine items that reflect students' ratings of their level of confidence in their ability to do well in classroom work. Typical items include the following: "Compared with others in this class, I think I'm a good student" and "I know that I will be able to learn the material for this class." Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) reported that the Self-Efficacy subscale is reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .89).

The Test Anxiety subscale includes four items that reflect students' ratings of their experience of disabling levels of anxiety associated with classroom tests and examinations. Typical items include the following: "I am so nervous during a test that I cannot remember facts I have learned" and "I worry a great deal about tests." Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) reported that the Self-Efficacy subscale is reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .75).

Factor analyses indicated that these MSLQ subscales are related to different latent factors. Scores on the Cognitive Strategy Use subscale have been demonstrated to be related to grades on quizzes and examinations, grades on essays and reports, and overall class grades. Scores on the Self-Regulation subscale have been shown to be related to the above measures plus student performance on classroom seatwork assignments. Scores on the Self-Efficacy subscale have been demonstrated to be related to students' grades on quizzes and examinations, grades for classroom seatwork assignments, grades on essays and reports, and overall class grades. Scores on the Test Anxiety subscale proved to be associated with lower levels of performance on classroom examinations and quizzes, as well as course grades (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990).

Duncan and McKeachie (2005) reviewed the extensive research on the psychometric properties and research uses of the MSLQ. They concluded that the subscales are reliable, measure their target constructs and have been

successfully used in numerous studies to measure student change after educational interventions targeting these constructs.

Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning scale. The SESRL was designed to measure students' confidence in their abilities to perform self-regulatory strategies. It is a seven-item self-report instrument based on the Children's Self-Efficacy Scale (Bandura, 2006; Usher & Pajares, 2008). Items (e.g., "How well can you motivate yourself to do schoolwork?") reflect students' judgments about their abilities to perform self-regulation strategies identified by teachers as being frequently used by students (Pajares & Valiante, 1999). The scale has been used successfully with older elementary students in a self-read format and with fourth graders in a *read aloud* administration format (Usher & Pajares, 2006). Cronbach's alpha estimates of reliability have ranged between .78 and .84 (Britner & Pajares, 2006; Pajares & Valiante, 2002; Usher & Pajares, 2008). Factor analysis has suggested that the scale is unidimensional. Concurrent validity studies have indicated that the scale is related to measures of self-efficacy, task orientation and achievement (Usher & Pajares, 2006).

Data Analysis

In the initial analysis of the three SESSS subscales, the present authors used mean imputation to replace missing survey responses, by replacing a missing response with the overall mean for that survey item. For each of the 33 SESSS items, only 8.3%–9.1% of the responses were missing. Mean imputation is appropriate when the percentage of missing data is less than 10% and can be considered to be missing at random (Longford, 2005). In the current study, the students with missing survey data had an average SESSS score equal to that of the students with a complete response set, thus supporting the notion that the data were missing at random. Coefficient alpha, used as a measure of reliability, was calculated for each of the subscales before missing values were replaced.

Both convergent and discriminant evidence is needed in the validation process (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Messick, 1993). Messick (1993) argued that while convergent evidence is important, it can mask certain problems. For example, if all tests of a construct do not measure a particular facet of that construct, the tests could all correlate highly. Likewise, if all tests of a construct include some particular form of construct-irrelevant variance, then the tests may correlate even more strongly because of that fact. Due to these possible shortcomings of convergent evidence, discriminant evidence is needed to ensure that the test is not correlated with another construct that could account for the misleading convergent evidence.

To determine the validity of the three SESSS subscales, the authors examined the correlations between each of the subscales with five other measures: four subscales of the MSLQ (Self-Efficacy, Cognitive Strategy Use, Self-Regulation and Test Anxiety), and the SESRL. Specifically, the authors considered the strength and direction of the SESSS subscales' correlations with these other measures.

Results

Descriptive statistics and reliability estimates for the instruments used in this study are contained in Table 2. Coefficient alphas for the three SESSS subscales (Self-Direction of Learning, Support of Classmates' Learning and Self-Regulation of Arousal), were 0.89, 0.79 and 0.68, respectively, and 0.90 for the SESSS as a whole. These results indicate good internal consistency (i.e., that the items within each instrument measure the same construct).

All correlations between pairs of subscales appear in Table 3. Because of the large sample size in this study, statistical significance by itself could be misleading, so the authors used the magnitude and direction of the correlations for their interpretations. Correlation is an effect size reflecting the degree of association of

two variables (Ellis, 2010). The correlations among the three SESSS subscales ranged between .47 and .70, which suggests that the subscales measured related but discriminable dimensions of students' success skill use. In assessing the concurrent validity of these three subscales, it was helpful to first focus on the scales that correlated most highly with the three SESSS subscales. The three SESSS subscales followed the same pattern with respect to strength of correlation. All three correlated most highly with both the Cognitive Strategy Use and Self-Regulation subscales of the MSLQ. These two subscales measure the students' reported use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies associated with effort management and effective learning.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Estimates for the Study Scales

Scales	Scales	M	SD	Alpha
SESSS	Self-Direction of Learning	48.6	10.88	0.89
	Support of Classmates' Learning	16.6	4.28	0.79
	Self-Regulation of Arousal	7.9	2.60	0.68
MSLQ	Self-Efficacy	28.3	4.41	0.83
	Cognitive Strategy Use	48.6	8.31	0.82
	Self-Regulation	31.2	5.08	0.75
	Test Anxiety	8.8	4.03	0.79
SESRL	Self-Eff. for Self-Reg. Learning	31.2	6.10	0.83

Note. SESSS = Student Engagement in School Success Skills; MSLQ = Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire; SESRL = Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning.

Table 3

Correlations Between Scales

	SESSS			MSLQ				
	SDL	SCL	SRA	SE	CSU	SR	TA	SESRL
SESSS								
SDL	-----	0.70*	0.58*	0.28*	0.54*	0.53*	-0.02	0.44*
SCL		-----	0.47*	0.25*	0.39*	0.39*	-0.02	0.35*
SRA			-----	0.12*	0.32*	0.30*	0.08*	0.24*
MSLQ								
SE				-----	0.61*	0.54*	-0.38*	0.67*
CSU					-----	0.70*	-0.20*	0.68*
SR						-----	-0.25*	0.70*
TA							-----	-0.35*
SESRL								-----

Note. SESSS = Student Engagement in School Success Skills survey; MSLQ = Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire; SESRL = Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning scale; SDL = Self-Direction of Learning; SCL = Support of Classmates' Learning; SRA = Self-Regulation of Arousal; SE = Self-Efficacy; CSU = Cognitive Strategy Use; SR = Self-Regulation; TA = Test Anxiety; *p < .01

Next, the three SESSS subscales correlated with the SESRL, which measures students' beliefs in their capability to engage in common effective self-regulation learning strategies. Again, all three SESSS subscales followed the same pattern, and had a considerable drop in magnitude of correlation with the MSLQ Self-Efficacy subscale, which measures students' reports of general academic self-efficacy. While smaller, the correlations with the Self-Efficacy subscale (which ranged between .12 and .28) were practically different than 0. The Self-Direction of Learning subscale had the strongest correlations with the other measures, followed by the Support of Classmates' Learning subscale and finally by the Self-Regulation of Arousal subscale. There is evidence that the three SESSS subscales, the Cognitive Strategy Use subscale and the Self-Regulation subscale of the MSLQ, and the SESRL all measure some common dimension of an underlying construct, probably relating to students' intentional use of strategies to promote effective learning.

The Self-Regulation of Arousal subscale was the only one of the three SESSS subscales to be significantly correlated with the MSLQ Test Anxiety subscale. Conceptually, students' abilities to self-regulate arousal should be related to their reported levels of test anxiety. However, given the weak relationship ($r = 0.08$) and the fact that this observed correlation was actually opposite in direction to the relationship that would be expected, this finding should not be given undue weight. The results of this study offer little to no evidence that the three SESSS subscales measure the same construct as the MSLQ Test Anxiety subscale. This weak or nonexistent relationship is discriminant evidence in that the other SESSS subscales did not correlate strongly or at all with the MSLQ Test Anxiety subscale. However, the three other MSLQ subscales and the SESRL all showed moderate, negative correlations with the MSLQ Test Anxiety subscale. These differing patterns of correlation with MSLQ Test Anxiety suggest that the SESSS subscales capture a different dimension than the common dimension of the underlying construct measured by the MSLQ subscales (including the Test Anxiety subscale) and the SESRL.

Discussion

The observed pattern of results is very useful in determining the validity of inferences that currently can be made from SESSS scores. Based on prior factor analytic studies (Brigman et al., 2014; Carey et al., 2013), the present authors made an attempt to create three SESSS subscales based on the items that load most strongly on each of three underlying factors. These three SESSS subscales showed good internal consistency and moderate intercorrelations suggesting that the three subscales most probably measure related but discriminable dimensions of students' success skill use. However, the three SESSS subscales showed essentially the same pattern of correlation with comparison scales. Similarly, the pattern of results suggests that there is little or no overlap between the construct measured by the three SESSS subscales and the construct measured by the Test Anxiety subscale of the MSLQ.

Unfortunately, these results do not shed much light on any differences among the SESSS subscales. Each subscale showed essentially the same pattern of correlations with the comparison scales even where differences would have been expected. For example, the authors would have expected the SESSS Self-Regulation of Arousal subscale to correlate significantly with the MSLQ Test Anxiety subscale, since individuals who are better able to regulate their levels of emotional arousal would be expected to experience less specific anxiety.

These results suggest that the SESSS as a whole represents a valid measure of students' intentional use of strategies to promote academic success. While prior factor analytic studies (Brigman et al., 2014; Carey et al., 2013) have suggested that the SESSS has three related dimensions, making inferences based upon the three SESSS subscales related to these dimensions is not warranted. Instead, until evidence can be found that these three subscales measure discriminable dimensions of success skill use, the SESSS should be used as a unitary measure in research and practice. Future research in this area is necessary.

Conclusion

Researchers have thoroughly documented the need for school counselors to demonstrate their impact on student achievement (Brown & Trusty, 2005; Dimmitt et al., 2007; Whiston & Quinby, 2009; Whiston & Sexton, 1998; Whiston et al., 2011). School counselor-led interventions that provide evidence of improving student performance remain at the top of national initiatives and research agendas (ASCA, 2005; Dimmitt et al., 2005). However, there is a limited amount of standardized outcome assessments specifically tied to school counselor interventions available to evaluate changes in student knowledge, skills and attitudes related to academic achievement.

The SESSS is easy to administer (it takes fewer than 15 minutes to complete) and educators use it in schools to gain valuable information about students' use of skills and strategies related to school success. Results on the SESSS may be used to improve the implementation of school counselor-led interventions and reinforcement of specific skills in school and home settings. Current findings indicate that SESSS results should be interpreted as a whole rather than by subscale. SESSS results can be used to monitor student progress, and identify gaps in learning as well as factors affecting student behavior.

The SESSS may be used as a screening tool to identify students in need of school counseling interventions and to evaluate student growth in the academic and behavioral domains. A review of SESSS student data may reveal gaps between student groups and identify the need for additional education opportunities, as well as lead to decisions about future goals of the school counseling program and discussions with administration and staff about program improvement (Carey et al., 2013). Finally, SESSS student data can be used to demonstrate how school counselors can impact student academic and personal/social development related to classroom learning and achievement. SESSS results can be shared with various stakeholders through a variety of report formats (e.g., Web sites, handouts, newsletters), publications, or presentations at the local, regional or national level to document the school counselor's ability to affect student outcomes most related to parents, administrators and other staff (Carey et al., 2013).

There is one limitation in the study worth noting. While the sample size for the current analysis is considered large and diverse, all participants represented a single grade level, fifth grade, and two public school districts. Future analyses should include students from various elementary and secondary settings and grade levels.

Future research on the psychometric properties of the SESSS should include studies that address (a) the reliability and intercorrelations of the assessments corresponding to the three SESSS subscales and (b) the predictive validity that establishes the relationships between SESSS subscales and measures of academic success (e.g., achievement test scores, grades, teacher ratings). These additional studies are necessary to firmly establish the utility of the SESSS as a reliable and valid measure of student success skills.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The authors reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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