

# The Symbiotic Relationships of the Counseling Profession's Accrediting Body, American Counseling Association, Flagship Journal and National Certification Agency



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To inform and guide their practices, counselor educators would benefit from having a clearer picture of how the research literature and professional standards of the field correspond and contrast. To elucidate this relationship, researchers analyzed 538 *Journal of Counseling and Development* articles published from 1997–2006 for fit with the 2001 and 2009 eight core areas of Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The articles fell into three tiers delineated by year and based on the number of articles assigned to each core area. Human Growth and Development and Helping Relationships are the two core areas most frequently represented across the 10 year time span examined.

*Keywords:* professional standards, research literature, CACREP, NBCC, ACA, Human growth and development, helping relationships

There is an inherent symbiotic relationship that exists among related professional organizations. Within the counseling profession, there are a number of organizations or entities that coexist, support one another, encourage and challenge one another, disseminate information, and act as gatekeepers. These major counseling entities include the American Counseling Association (ACA), the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC), the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and the *Journal of Counseling and Development (JCD)*. These entities mutually influence each other by acting and reacting to needs, changes and research findings within the counseling profession.

Given the new CACREP 2009 standards, it is now time for counselor educators to review and possibly revamp their training programs to better reflect the current issues faced by those in the counseling field. Counselor educators will benefit from having a clearer picture of how our research literature and professional standards correspond and contrast to inform and guide our practices.

As the respective flagship journal and primary accrediting standards of the counseling field, the *JCD* and the CACREP standards are predominant guiding resources that reflect, communicate, and shape the values, interests, and work of counselor educators. As *JCD* is the journal for ACA, and as the National Counselor Examination is based on CACREP requirements, an obvious extension to include these entities occurs as well. These entities also influence each other. *JCD* and CACREP can be seen as leaders of an input loop in the counseling profession. *JCD*, as the flagship journal for the American Counseling Association (ACA), shapes counselors', stakeholders' and counselor educators' views of the counseling field. Continuing the loop, every seven years CACREP engages in a review of its standards for counseling programs. This review includes invitations for input from all counselors and stakeholders (Bobby & Kandor, 1995). As the revised standards are enacted in CACREP and CACREP-modeled programs, the standards influence the education and licensing of counselors, which then influences the work, research, writing, and submissions to *JCD* from the counseling field over time; *JCD* article topics, content, and methodology loop again to inform counseling practitioners, students, and educators.

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While the 2009 CACREP standards revisions are implemented into counseling programs, it seems an important time for counselor educators to reflect on and explore the profession's flagship journal articles in relation to future CACREP standards and to discuss future counseling literature that will shape and inform directions for counselor educators and the counseling field. Calls for a strong professional counselor identity (CACREP, 2009; Gale & Austin, 2003; Goodyear, 1984; Hansen, 2003) and professional unity from a recent ACA President (Canfield, 2007) would also seem to indicate the need to reflect on and gain perspective from the trends and foci of our professional literature. The current study provides an analysis and discussion of the fit of *JCD* articles from 1997–2006 with the eight core areas in both the 2001 and adopted 2009 CACREP standards. We selected this 10-year span because the research project began in late 2007 and 2006 represented the last complete year of *JCD* articles at that time. We hope such an analysis will help illuminate areas for potential change in counselor education programs.

## Professional Organizations and Publications in Counseling

### American Counseling Association

With its roots as far back as 1952, ACA is the world's largest association focused exclusively on representing professional counselors. As reflected on their website, "The ACA is dedicated to the growth and development of the counseling profession and those who are served" (ACA, 2010). Its mission is to enhance the quality of life in society and promote the development of professional counselors, advance the counseling profession, and use the profession and practice of counseling to promote respect for human dignity and diversity (ACA). ACA has 56 chartered branches in the U.S., Latin America and Europe and currently boasts 42,594 members. To communicate to its membership and inform the profession of contemporary issues and treatment modalities, ACA publishes an online website, numerous textbooks, *Counseling Today* (its monthly magazine) and *JCD* (its official journal).

### *Journal of Counseling and Development*

In addition to being ACA's primary journal, *JCD* appears to have grown to a significant readership, and this is particularly interesting considering that at least two-thirds of ACA members receive *JCD* as their only ACA journal. According to ACA (personal communication, Rae Ann Sites, December 20, 2007), the *JCD* Winter 2008 issue had a total print run circulation of 43,500 journals. Approximately 1,000 of these subscribers are institutional subscribers (i.e., college/university libraries). Therefore, it seems logical to assume the majority of subscribers are individual ACA members.

Members also have the option to join one or more of 17 divisions within ACA and many of these divisions publish their own journals. As of December 20, 2007, the cumulative membership in these 17 divisions was 16,279. At most, division membership could represent 37% of ACA members, but it is important to note that some ACA members join multiple divisions, thus exaggerating the 37% figure. Following ACA's 1997 decision to allow ACA membership exclusive of a division membership and the 2004 decision to permit division separation from ACA, the American Mental Health Counseling Association (AMHCA) and American School Counseling Association (ASCA) announced independence from ACA and are no longer included in these 17 divisions. ACA data available from June 30, 2007, indicate 2,182 (approximately 5%) of ACA members who also were AMHCA members and 2,648 (approximately 6%) who also were ASCA members (personal communication, Jennifer Bauk, December 3, 2007). When compared to the total membership figures of these two professional counseling organizations (AMHCA, 5,860 [personal communication, Mark Hamilton, November 27, 2007]; ASCA, 23,021 [personal communication, Jennifer Bauk, December 3, 2007]), the percentage of AMHCA members who joined ACA was 37% and ASCA members 16%. From these data, it is apparent that *JCD* is circulated to a wide and diverse counselor audience. Therefore, we can assume that many graduates of our training programs will read only *JCD* as their professional journal to inform them of current issues and important research.

### Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs

CACREP has evolved to be a significant influence on the counseling field. A brief recap highlights CACREP's growing influence. Bobby and Kandor (1992) reported that 44 programs housed within 16 institutions were granted approval by CACREP's Board of Directors at the Council's first meeting in 1981. In 1992, 195 programs had gained accreditation (Bobby & Kandor); and in 2004, that number had risen to 434 (McGlothlin & Davis, 2004). Currently, CACREP has accredited 505 programs housed within 210 institutions across 48 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. In addition,

117 programs are currently being considered for CACREP accreditation. This is evidence of CACREP becoming more wide spread and ingrained within the counseling profession (CACREP, 2007).

### **National Board for Certified Counselors**

Developed in 1982, NBCC conducts a national certification program for professional counselors; it is one of two leading certification organizations for the counseling profession, the other being the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). Although initially created by ACA, NBCC operates as an independent body without direct connection to ACA. Currently, over 46,000 counselors hold the National Certified Counselor (NCC) credential (NBCC, n. d.). In 41 states (82%), NBCC's National Counselor Examination (NCE) is used as part of the licensure process.

The NCE contains eight content and five work behavior areas. The eight content areas mirror those in CACREP's core curriculum and include human growth and development, social and cultural foundations, helping relationships, group work, career and lifestyle development, appraisal, research and program evaluation, and professional orientation and ethics. The five work behavior areas include fundamentals of counseling, assessment and career, group, programmatic and clinical intervention, and professional practice (NBCC, n. d.). Given this consistent overlap in core components and the growing use of the NCE for state licensure requirements, it is apparent that NBCC, ACA, *JCD*, and CACREP are linked in their view of what effective counselors need to know.

### **Support for Professional Organizations in Counseling**

CACREP, *JCD* and NBCC have been the focus of several empirical studies. Over the past 10 years, researchers have examined issues pertaining to CACREP standards including supervision (LaFountain & Baer, 1999), spirituality and religion (Burke, Hackney, Hudson, Maranti, Watts, & Epp, 1999), community counseling (Hershenson & Berger, 1999), and school counseling (Holcomb-McCoy, Bryan, & Rahill, 2002). Haight (1992) investigated the CACREP standards, focusing on the quality of the standards. In addition, researchers have explored CACREP standards' relevance to counselor preparation (Vacc, 1992) and their perceived benefit for practitioners (McGlothlin & Davis, 2004). Although some researchers have challenged the standards, most reviews and discussions related to CACREP have been favorable (Schmidt, 1999).

Vacc (1992) investigated counselor educator perceptions of the 1988 standards relevance to the preparation of counselors. He found that respondents judged each of the eight CACREP core areas as crucial or important to counselor preparation. Percentages of perceived importance ranged from 91% to 100%, with Social and Cultural Competence perceived as least relevant and Group Development, Dynamics, and Counseling Theories perceived as most relevant. Based on these findings, Vacc concluded that the data provided evidence to support the validity of the standards.

McGlothlin and Davis (2004) investigated perceived benefits of the CACREP standards. They surveyed counselors to determine perceptions of the benefits of the 2001 core curriculum standards. The core curriculum standards were perceived as being beneficial overall. Ranked in order of perceived benefit (highest to lowest) were: Helping Relationships, Human Growth and Development, Social and Cultural Diversity, Group Work, Professional Identity, Assessment, Career Development, and Research and Program Evaluation. Both studies established credibility for CACREP's eight core standards.

As noted earlier, NBCC provides the examination used for professional licensure in the U.S. (NBCC, n. d.). Support exists for NBCC due to its oversight of the NCE. Adams (2006) compared NBCC National Counselor Exam scores across CACREP and non-accredited programs. She found that graduates of CACREP-accredited programs scored significantly higher than those from non-accredited programs. Pistole and Roberts (2002) encourage licensure as a primary way to secure professional identity. Similarly, Calley and Hawley (2008) identified professional certification and licensure, along with membership in professional organizations such as ACA, as ways counselor educators help promote a professional counseling identity. Support for both NBCC and the NCE is evident and furthers counselor professional identity.

*JCD* publications can be seen as shaped by a number of forces and as evolving over time. For example, Weinrach (1987) argued that *JCD* had been fashioned by contributors' articles and editors' aims. Twelve years later Williams and Buboltz (1999) asserted that *JCD* publications were influenced by changes within society, evolving counselor and student needs, the

teaching aims of professors, and most importantly by the research and practical topics that are popular during a historical period.

The content analysis by Williams and Buboltz (1999) of volumes 67–74 most closely resembles the aims of the current study. Their article analysis covered a nine-year span and cross-classified articles into 11 categories (e.g., Counselor Selection, Training and Evaluation, Personal Development and Adjustment, Technology and Media, and Special Groups) and sub-grouped articles by editorship. The purpose of their study was to identify possible topic changes and trends over time and *JCD* editors. Overall ranking of topics pertinent to the 8 core areas identified by CACREP included Individual, Group Counseling, and Consultation ranked first, Special Groups third, Vocational Development and Adjustment/ Career Counseling seventh, and Technology and Media tenth.

In this study, ACA is assumed to be represented by its flagship journal, *JCD*, while NBCC is represented by CACREP, as the NCE is based on CACREP accreditation standards. To date, no study has analyzed *JCD* article content by CACREP core areas. In addition, no study could be found that focused on the similarities and differences between what is required for appropriate training and licensure of counselors and what is represented in the flagship journal of the counseling profession. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to provide that analysis and discussion for the consideration of counselor educators and the counseling field.

## Method

### Procedure

Using first the 2001 standards and later the 2009 revisions, two researchers used a qualitative content analysis method to sort articles into the eight CACREP core areas. The eight CACREP core areas included Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice; Social and Cultural Diversity; Human Growth and Development; Career Development; Helping Relationships; Group Work; Assessment; and Research and Program Evaluation. Researchers independently analyzed content by sorting articles by CACREP core area. As per classic content analysis procedures described by Ryan and Bernard (2000), researchers assumed that the eight 2001 CACREP core curricular experience areas were the pre-defined codes of interest. Because of the time span from which articles were analyzed (i.e., 1997–2006), the researchers determined that both an analysis of the 2001 and 2009 standards was appropriate given that the 2001 standards were adopted during this time period and analysis of the 2009 standards would provide insight as to how previous articles would fit into the future standards.

First, researchers independently analyzed the *JCD* articles using the 2001 standards. After independent analysis, the two researchers compared findings, identified matching results and noted findings on which they differed. A list was established identifying the articles on which the two researchers disagreed. The same two researchers independently reanalyzed these articles and then met to compare findings again. No comparisons were made between the first and second attempts in order to maintain the independence of the second analysis. After this second attempt, the researchers obtained a cross-rater reliability of .93 for the 2001 data. Of the remaining articles for which coding differed, 20 differed in coding for CACREP core area. These articles were equally distributed throughout the 10 years of *JCD* being analyzed and were not representative of a single time period or editor. These remaining articles were coded by a third researcher, once again independent of the first two analyses. The three coders then reviewed each article together and, through consensus, determined the best placement for each.

After completing analysis using the 2001 CACREP standards, the two researchers addressed the data using the 2009 CACREP standards. The researchers noted that the eight core CACREP area titles remained constant between 2001 and 2009. However, differences between the 2001 and 2009 standards included changes within the eight core areas. Changes typically included additions of specific counseling related practices into core areas. Within the Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice core, additions were made related to crisis management and counselor self-care. Under Social Cultural Diversity, counselor self-awareness, social justice, and cultural skill development were added. In the Human Growth and Development core, additions included the effects of crises on individuals and theories of resiliency. The Career Development core remained relatively unchanged. Helping Relationships added crisis response and wellness orientation. Group Work and Assessment core areas remained substantively unchanged while Research and Program Evaluation incorporated evaluative measures and ethics related to research (CACREP, 2009). One overall change appeared to be that culturally inclusive language was more represented across most of the core areas. With these changes in mind, the two

researchers independently re-reviewed titles and abstracts of all articles for 2009 CACREP core area best fit.

## Analysis

The total number of articles in the *JCD* 1997–2006 issues was 538, excluding minutes from ethics committees and calls for editorial board members. Researchers examined 479 out of the 538 possible articles. Fifty-nine articles (11%) were eliminated from coding including interviews of well-known counselors and reviews of other articles (typically found in the *Trends* section). These articles did not fit into the predetermined coding categories. In all cases, an attempt was made to select only one option per area. Coding was based on the core area which was most representative of describing the article. For the 2001 Standards, approximately 7% of the cases (35 of 479 articles), were impossible to fit into only one area, so two areas were selected for coding. Three additional articles needed two areas after being reanalyzed with the 2009 Standards. For example, some articles were equally about a client issue and how counselors could effectively address the issue. These articles were coded as representative of both the Human Growth and Development and Helping Relationships core areas. In the two cases that no CACREP core area was found to match the article, an ‘Other’ category was selected. This category was used only when both researchers found it impossible to connect the article to a CACREP area.

When analyzing *JCD* articles using the 2009 CACREP core areas, researchers identified 97 articles that required reanalysis. These 97 articles were fully analyzed again. Fifty-nine of the 97 articles remained unchanged from the original assigned coding. Three articles were changed from representing two core areas to just one core area. Six articles were changed from representing one core area to two core areas (included originally coded CACREP core area plus one additional CACREP core area). Twenty-nine articles were recoded to a new core area.

## Results

Due to the fact that only 29 (6%) of the 479 articles differed across core areas coding from the 2001 to 2009 CACREP standards, and because the proportional ranks remain the same, researchers are providing the 2009 CACREP Standards results, as 2009 is the current standard. CACREP core area results are presented in Table 1. The core area with the most articles was Human Growth and Development, followed by Helping Relationships and Social and Cultural Diversity. Group Work, Research and Program Evaluation, and Career Development were the least represented core areas. Thirty-eight of the articles were coded in two core areas, and all of the core areas were represented at least twice in a two-coded article. Seventeen of the two-coded articles involved Social and Cultural Diversity, 15 involved Helping Relationships, and 14 involved Human Growth and Development.

**Table 1**

*Results by CACREP Core Areas in 2009 Standards*

CACREP Core Areas	Frequency	Percentage
Human Growth and Development	136	26.3%
Helping Relationships	121	23.4%
Social and Cultural Diversity	102	19.7%
Professional Orientation	69	13.3%
Assessment	29	5.6%
Career Development	28	5.4%
Research and Program Evaluation	21	4.1%
Group Work	9	1.7%
Other	2	1.0%

*Note.* Total exceeds 479 due to two coding selections for 38 articles.



Rankings of core areas by percentage of articles tended to be stable throughout the 10-year focus period of this study. Human Growth and Development and Helping Relationships had the top two highest percentages of articles in the 10-year average and maintained consistently high percentages across the years, having been the first or second largest article category each year, except one. Within our analysis, these core areas formed the highest tier. Social and Cultural Diversity and Professional Orientation had the third and fourth highest percentages of articles and were ranked third or fourth each year (except one year for Professional Orientation and two years for Social and Cultural Diversity, affected by a special issue focused on that topic in 1999). Within our analysis, these core areas formed the middle tier. Assessment, Career Development, Research and Program Evaluation, and Group Work consistently varied from fourth to eighth in article percentages and formed the lowest tier of the rankings. These core areas not only occupied the lowest tier, but the percentages of articles representing them were noticeably lower than those representing the four leading core areas.

**Table 2**

*Results by CACREP Core Areas by Years 1997–2001 and 2002–2006*

CACREP Area	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
<i>Years 1997–2001</i>					
Human Growth and Development	13 (46.4%)	10 (21.3%)	8 (12.3%)	18 (34.6%)	15 (30.3%)
Helping Relationships	8 (28.6%)	13 (27.7%)	12 (18.5%)	6 (11%)	12 (24.0%)
Social and Cultural Diversity	2 (7.1%)	8 (17.0%)	30 (46.2%)	10 (19.2%)	6 (12.0%)
Professional Orientation	5 (17.9%)	8 (17.0%)	10 (15.4%)	9 (17.3%)	9 (16.0%)
Assessment	2 (7.1%)	3 (6.4%)	4 (6.2%)	7 (13.5%)	3 (6.0%)
Career Development	0	4 (8.5%)	4 (6.2%)	4 (7.7%)	2 (4.0%)
Research and Program Evaluation	2 (7.1%)	2 (4.3%)	0	1 (1.9%)	5 (10.0%)
Group Work	0	3 (6.4%)	1 (1.5%)	0	1 (2.0%)
Other	0	1 (2.1%)	1 (1.5%)	0	0
Total Articles per Year	28	47	65 <sup>a</sup>	52	50
CACREP Area	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<i>Years 2002–2006</i>					
Human Growth and Development	11 (21.6%)	15 (32.1%)	18 (37.5%)	13 (27.1%)	15 (34.1%)
Helping Relationships	16 (31.4%)	12 (26.1%)	14 (29.2%)	13 (27.1%)	15 (34.1%)
Social and Cultural Diversity	7 (13.7%)	11 (23.9%)	5 (10.4%)	17 (35.4%)	6 (13.6%)
Professional Orientation	7 (13.7%)	5 (10.9%)	6 (12.5%)	7 (14.6%)	4 (9.1%)
Assessment	4 (7.8%)	0	4 (8.3%)	0	2 (4.5%)
Career Development	5 (9.8%)	6 (13.0%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (2.3%)
Research and Program Evaluation	1 (2.0%)	1 (2.2%)	3 (6.3%)	4 (8.3%)	2 (4.5%)
Group Work	3 (5.9%)	1 (2.2%)	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Total Articles per Year	51	46	48	48	44

*Note.* Numbers may exceed total articles due to two coding selections for some articles.

a = includes special issue on personal stories related to multiculturalism.

Results by CACREP Core Areas across the ten year span are presented in Table 2. Over the 10-year period, most CACREP core areas are equivalently represented with minor fluctuations between years. Human Growth and Development and Helping Relationships are the two core areas most frequently represented and are reasonably consistent in percentage of articles representation from year to year across the 10 years. Human Growth and Development core area articles ranged in frequency from 8 to 19 across the years with a mean of 13.6 articles per year. Helping Relationships articles ranged from 6 to 16 with a mean of 12.1 articles published per year. Professional Orientation is the most consistent core area from year to year (range of 4 to 9 articles) with a moderate number (mean = 6.7) of articles published per year. Social and Cultural Diversity fluctuates substantially from year to year with a low of 2 articles published in 1997, a high of 30 articles in 1999 and a mean of 10.2 for all ten years. Assessment articles are relatively steady from year to year, yet low in number with a range from 0 to 7 articles each year and a mean of 2.9 articles per year. Research and Program Evaluation is similar to Assessment in low but steady frequency across the years with a range from 0 to 5 articles and a mean of 2.1 per year. Notably, Research and Program Evaluation articles increased slightly in the latter five years. Career Development is low in frequency, but less steady across the years with a range from 0 to 6 and mean of 2.8 articles per year. Notably, only 3 articles were published in this core area in the last three years of this study (i.e., 2004–2006), one article each year. Lastly, Group Work article frequency ranged from 0 to 3 and the lowest average frequency at .9 per year. In the last three years no articles were published in the Group Work core area.

## Discussion

Having established the symbiotic relationship between four central counselor entities (i.e., CACREP, ACA, NBCC and *JCD*), the researchers focused their review on the overlap between the required CACREP training core and the topics represented in the counseling profession's flagship journal, *JCD*. We were primarily interested in relating the content of articles from 1997–2006 to the eight CACREP core areas. When we began our study, we made the assumption that *JCD* and CACREP served as informative tools for its members and that CACREP standards were an appropriate measure of adequate counselor training. *JCD* purports "to publish articles that inform practicing professional counselors with diverse populations in a variety of settings and that address issues related to counselor education and supervision, as represented by the membership of the American Counseling Association" (*JCD*, n.d.). Whereas many specialty journals highlight one specific aspect or one core area, *JCD* attempts to provide relevant information that cuts across all CACREP core areas. Additionally, CACREP reports being "dedicated to (1) encouraging and promoting the continuing development and improvement of preparation programs, and (2) preparing counseling and related professionals to provide service consistent with the ideal of optimal human development" (CACREP, n.d.). In the counseling flagship journal and accrediting body, a goal exists to prepare, train, and provide counselors with information necessary to good clinical practice. As stated earlier, *JCD* is the journal representing ACA, and NBCC bases the NCE on current CACREP standards.

The results highlight an overlap between the missions and goals of *JCD* and CACREP with a weighted emphasis in key CACREP core areas. Results in Table 1 indicate that almost 70% of the articles published during this time period fall under three CACREP areas: Human Growth and Development, Helping Relationships, and Social and Cultural Diversity. It seems sensible and fitting to us that *JCD* articles would emphasize these areas. Remley and Herlihy (2007) stated that one of the essential beliefs in the counseling profession is that problems individuals face in life are developmental in nature. *JCD*'s emphasis on Human Growth and Development aligns with CACREP's view that counseling helps clients work toward optimal human development. Additionally, the focus on Helping Relationships in *JCD* seems appropriate given the preponderance of research and literature across time that support relationship variables as most important in predicting outcome in counseling (e.g., Bergin & Lambert, 1978; Cochran & Cochran, 2006; Krumboltz, Becker-Haver, & Burnett, 1979; Lambert & Okiishi, 1997; Lubersky et al., 1986; Norcross, 2002; & Wampold, 2001). Finally, the 2009 CACREP standards support both a broad definition of Social and Cultural Diversity as a core area and the more specific recommendation of incorporating this concept into every course. This change relates to the current belief that cultural issues are not separate from other aspects of counseling, but rather integrated into all counseling activities.

Results indicated subtle yet notable shifts in the literature focus from those in previous research studies. For example, when Vacc (1992) investigated counselor educator perceptions of the CACREP standards relevance to the preparation of counselors, he found Social and Cultural Competence perceived as least relevant while results of the current study indicate Social and Cultural Diversity as in the middle tier of topic occurrence in *JCD* from 1996–2007. This seems to reflect the increased emphasis given to Social and Cultural Diversity within the counseling field in the last 20 years. Additionally, Vacc found Group Development and Dynamics was perceived as one of the core areas considered most relevant by

counselor educators. The current study indicates that *JCD* articles focused on Group Work ranked in the lowest tier of frequency of occurrence. This could indicate a shift in importance over time or incongruence between counselor educator perceived importance and the number of *JCD* articles published in core areas. Finally, whereas group counseling and vocational development were covered extensively in *JCD* in the mid-1980s and early 1990s (William & Buboltz, 1999), our findings demonstrated considerably less focus on these areas over the last 10 years. Clearly, some important shifts in the literature have occurred over the past 25 years.

We find it important to also note the match between the ranked frequencies of *JCD* articles within the CACREP core areas and the results of McGlothlin and Davis' (2004) study of the core areas perceived benefits. McGlothlin and Davis' survey results ranked counselors' perceptions of the importance of the core areas in nearly the exact rank of article frequency in *JCD* by core area. This suggests an overall match between publication patterns of *JCD* and the valuing of CACREP core areas among counselors.

## Implications for Counselor Educators and Practitioners

It is clear that the articles published in *JCD* follow many of the trends suggested by CACREP as training requirements for counselors. If, however, as the earlier statistics suggest, *JCD* is the only professional journal received by the majority of ACA members, it is important for practitioners to recognize that they may not regularly be receiving as much ongoing information in these core areas compared to others, especially if they are only receiving *JCD*. Career development is viewed as a central factor in the lives of most people (Betz & Corning, 1993). For counselors working with children and adolescents, career development is influenced by a multitude of factors, including perceived barriers and supports (Kenny, Blustein, Chaves, Grossman, & Gallagher, 2003), family background (Eccles, Vida, & Barber, 2004), and self-efficacy beliefs (Pinquart, Juang, & Silbereisan, 2003). In adults, career-related concerns are linked with traumatic experiences (Strauser, Lustig, Cogdal, & Uruk, 2006), relationship problems (Risch, Riley, & Lawler, 2003), and overall stress (Pinquart et al.). Clearly, most counselors will encounter a need to discuss career-related issues with their clients, yet findings suggest that counselors may not receive a robust and ongoing supply of contemporary theoretical or research-based treatment approaches on this topic in *JCD*.

In addition, many counselors have the opportunity to facilitate groups as a part of their work. Vacc's (1992) finding that counselor educators perceived Group Development and Dynamics as one of the most relevant core areas to the preparation of counselors and McGlothlin and Davis' (2004) finding that Group Work ranked fourth in perceived benefit of the CACREP standards suggests that Group Work may be of importance to current working counselors, even though it is not well represented in *JCD*. Continuing education through professional journals can be a way to keep counselors-in-training, practicing counselors, supervisors and counselor educators abreast of new research and ideas regarding career and groups. Counselor educators, as well as clinical supervisors and counseling practitioners, would benefit by realizing that supplemental journals are needed to ensure adequate information on group dynamics is reaching their students and supervisee's or informing their counseling practice.

Research and Program Evaluation and Assessment also received less representation in *JCD*. Counselors-in-training often struggle with these subjects or report disliking the bland content of these courses (Stockton & Toth, 1997). In fact, Bauman (2004) surveyed school counselors and found only 49% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt prepared to critique research, and only 43% agreed or strongly agreed that they had the skills needed to complete a research project on their own. Currently, a call in the profession exists promoting practitioners to conduct research in the field (Kaffenberger, 2009; Niles, 2003; Whiston, 1996), but with these feelings about research and assessment, it is unlikely that many will do so. Practitioners need to look beyond *JCD* for professional development on becoming competent and self-assured researchers. Knowing that a single journal is not the best option for gaining research self-efficacy might push practitioners to seek help elsewhere, rather than simply continuing on without furthering their knowledge.

Counselor educators and students can benefit in general from the findings of this study. For example, when conducting literature reviews or submitting research manuscripts for review, results provide guidance as to which counseling-related topics are more frequently or less frequently addressed in *JCD*. Results help to inform counselor educators when to best use and recommend *JCD* as an initial resource or different journal when they or their students are investigating specific topics within CACREP core areas. Additionally, one could argue that results suggest a reason to join multiple professional counseling organizations such as ASCA or AMHCA, or join the smaller sub-interest groups (e.g., National Career



Development Association and Association of Specialists in Group Work) when first joining ACA or renewing their ACA membership. Overall, having more information available on major sources of training and continuing education can only assist practitioners and educators in their roles.

## Implications for Future Research

Although this study provides an analysis of *JCD* articles over a 10-year period, with CACREP guidelines, additional research in this area is needed. Several ideas for future research foci are provided as preliminary courses of action. Researchers could help to identify students', counselor educators' and working counselors' perceptions as to the importance of some of the lesser represented areas, such as Career and Group. Additionally, perceptions from these same constituents on how *JCD*, ACA, NBCC, and/or CACREP shape their views of the counseling field seems to be worthy of investigation. More research focused on specific CACREP areas and articles from other journals (e.g., the types of articles that represent each CACREP area and the impact on continuing education and training of future counselors) would further illuminate the relationship between the accrediting body and the counseling journals in general. Regardless of the exact focus of future research, it is clear that there is a link between the counseling accrediting body and the flagship journal. Further research is needed into how *JCD* and other counseling journals, along with CACREP and NBCC, may have or will influence each other over time.

## Conclusion

It is our hope that the findings of the present study will be included in the perpetual input loop linking ACA, NBCC, *JCD*, CACREP and the counseling profession. With CACREP's 2009 accreditation standards being implemented, we believe now is a good time for the counseling profession to re-examine the roles of the major counseling entities' relationships to each other. Continuing this discussion, especially focusing on CACREP and ACA, may help strengthen the unity of our profession and further cement our identity as professional counselors.

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