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The *Journal of Professional Counseling: Practice, Theory, and Research* is a semi-annual publication seeking to advance clinical, theoretical, and empirical knowledge in counseling and psychotherapy. The journal invites manuscripts that are directed to the mutual interests of counselors and personnel workers in schools, colleges, community agencies, and government agencies. Especially welcome is stimulating writing dealing with: (a) practical and unique applications of counseling techniques in schools and clinical settings, (b) significant quantitative and qualitative research, (c) critical integrations of published research, (d) theoretical and social policy, and (e) scholarly reviews of professional materials.

1. The following articles are considered for publication:

*Articles*: Manuscripts should not exceed 4,000 words. There is not a lower limit; a subject line should seek its own limit.

*Dialogues*: Dialogues should take the form of verbatim exchange among two or more people, either oral or by correspondence. Dialogues are subject to the same length limitation as articles.

*Sharing*: Manuscripts should briefly report on or describe new practices, experimental programs, innovative techniques, and personal reflections.

*Responding*: Letter to the Editor and other responses intended for this section should be as short as possible, preferably under 300 words.

*Reviewing*: Reviews of a new book, a recent article in a professional journal, a new test or inventory are encouraged.

2. Manuscripts should be well-organized and concise so that the development of ideas is logical. Avoid dull stereotyped writing, and aim to communicate ideas clearly and interestingly to a readership composed mainly of practitioners.

3. Include a capsule statement (abstract) of 100 words or less with each copy of the manuscript. The statement should express the central idea of the article in non-technical language and should engage the reader's interest. Type on a separate sheet.

4. For quantitative research, estimates of effect size should be addressed along with interpretations of practical significance.

*Continued on following page*
5. For qualitative research, issues of trustworthiness with respect to the credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the analysis is required.

6. Avoid footnotes wherever possible.

7. Shorten article titles so that they do not exceed 50 letters and spaces.

8. Author’s name with position, title, and place of employment should appear only on the cover page.

9. Double-space all material, including references.


11. Never submit manuscripts that are under consideration by another periodical.

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13. Upon acceptance for publication, authors may be requested to provide both a hard copy of their manuscript (final version) and an additional electronic copy sent as an attachment, preferably in Microsoft Word format. Do not send electronic copies until requested to do so. Final copies should include the authors’ biographical information (#8).

Manuscripts not accepted after review will be returned for revision, or rejected as unacceptable for the journal.

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Qualitative methodology is the appropriate choice for many of the kinds of questions counselors and counselor educators wish to investigate. Qualitative researchers are likely to be those who enjoy “the endless possibilities to learn more about people…the opportunity to connect with them at a human level” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 13). Effective qualitative researchers accept the self as a research instrument, have the ability to live with ambiguity, are willing to take risks, have a strong sense of logic, and are able to recognize both diversity and regularity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Qualitative research is difficult to define as there is no single theory or paradigm and no single set of methods or practices that encompass qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Perhaps in part because of this broad range of paradigms and methods, producing good qualitative manuscripts can be difficult, especially for those new to qualitative research. Qualitative research scholars discuss and debate a variety of issues in qualitative methodology. For example, processes for evaluating data vary according to the qualitative paradigm being used. However, there are some areas of widespread agreement among those who regularly conduct and evaluate qualitative research about common problems and about elements of good manuscripts.

First, the choice of genre, methods, and analysis must be made on the basis of the purpose of the study (Patton, 2002). Authors should be sure that the type of qualitative research and its attendant methods are appropriate for the purpose of the study. A closely related concern is that good qualitative inquiry demands attention to and consistency in choice of methods throughout data gathering, analysis, presentation of findings, and discussion (Kline, 2008). Thus, authors are encouraged to carefully consider how the whole of the project fits together in order to be certain the purpose of the study and the intended audience are considered as they design the research.
EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE

project, formulate interview questions or identify sources of data, gather and analyze data, and present their results. Consistency in approach to the project, including ways in which data is analyzed and presented, provides credibility and assures reviewers and readers that the author is sufficiently knowledgeable about the methods used, and the findings and discussion can be trusted.

A second area of consensus about good qualitative manuscripts is the issue of trustworthiness or goodness. Methods used to establish trustworthiness or goodness of the research depend on the paradigm used in the overall research. Qualitative research based on a postpositivistic paradigm will use criteria for trustworthiness as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Triangulation of data is one way to demonstrate the credibility and dependability of the study and may combine different methods or kinds of data. Researchers may have multiple data sources or use different researchers or evaluators for examining data. Different methods for examining the same problem may be used, or multiple theoretical orientations may be used to interpret data. For example, researchers and authors may use a mix of interviews, focus groups, and document analysis in order to have multiple data sources. Triangulation serves as a test for consistency (Patton, 2002). In order to assess transferability, the audience needs sufficient information about research participants as well as the setting to be able to determine whether the results may be applicable to their own settings. Thus, sufficient description of study participants as well as the setting in which the study was conducted is crucial (Lincoln & Guba). Researchers should also provide sufficient information about how they conducted the study, including particulars about how the data was analyzed, how results were identified, and how audit trails were composed. Researcher bias and preconceptions should be identified. All of these strategies increase the likelihood that the research could be confirmed. While the purpose of qualitative research is not to produce generalizations, establishing trustworthiness depends on the transparency of methods used throughout (Choudhur, Glauser, & Peregoy, 2004).

Researchers using a constructivism or interpretive paradigm will be concerned with fairness, authenticity, and meaning as indicators of trustworthiness (Morrow, 2005). Triangulation and dependability (Patton, 2002) as well as deep understand-
ing of participants’ meaning, expansion of meaning, and mutual construction of meaning between/among researcher and participants are seen as critical components of trustworthiness (Morrow, 2005). Explanations of processes used in arriving at meanings or that consider issues of fairness and authenticity must be clear in the manuscript. Authors using a critical/ideological paradigm, which is often used when examining social justice, multicultural, or feminist issues, may include methods from other paradigms to establish trustworthiness, but may also consider the extent to which the research was successful in achieving change or inciting discourse about critical issues (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Morrow, 2005). Once again, transparency in how the authors deal with goodness or trustworthiness should be evident. Authors should cite qualitative research literature that addresses and supports the use of the methods chosen. Authors can find detailed information about these paradigms and approaches to trustworthiness in Patton (2002) and Guba and Lincoln (2005).

Whatever the paradigm, all qualitative manuscripts should address how subjectivity is approached. Reflexivity on the part of the researcher is crucial in qualitative research; that is, the researcher must be able to be self-reflective in order to be aware of biases and assumptions. Information about how reflexivity was encouraged and managed should be part of the manuscript. Adequacy of data is another indicator of good qualitative research. Sufficient data is not determined by numbers of participants, but by the depth of data, the variety of kinds of data, and adequate information about unique outcomes or data that is incongruent with the identified themes (Morrow, 2005). A final key indicator of good qualitative research is adequacy of interpretation. Often, qualitative researchers stop too soon in considering what their data has to offer. Authors should be immersed in the data and should explain the framework used to analyze the data. Immersion in data requires time spent thinking, analyzing, re-thinking, and re-analyzing data. Thus, descriptions of how the author was immersed in and analyzed the data are as important as consistency of design. Reviewers and readers should be able to see from the data presented how interpretations were made, thereby achieving balance between interpretation and the data.

Qualitative research is exciting, engrossing, and rewarding. However, consistency in genre, transparency in and
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An explanation of processes, and familiarity with (and citation of) qualitative research literature that supports the approach and methods used will enhance the likelihood of a positive outcome for manuscript submissions.

References
Many counselors report crisis as a primary presenting concern in their work settings. The need to attend to crisis preparation is highlighted in the new CACREP Standards. To date, the counselor education literature has contained little attention to crisis preparation methods. The authors present results of a study in which they examined crisis preparation practices in 52 CACREP-accredited master’s programs and conducted a content analysis of 12 crisis counseling courses. Implications for counseling and counselor education are discussed.

Counselors in all settings report crisis as a primary presenting concern for the individuals with whom they work (Barrio, 2006), and school counselors indicated that they are involved in potentially high-risk situations on a regular basis (Wachter, 2006). Unfortunately, the few researchers who have investigated this topic found that counselors reported preparation for their crisis duties to be inadequate (Allen, Burt, Bryan, Carter, Orsi, & Durkan, 2002; King, 2000; King, Price, Telljohann, & Wall, 1999; Wachter). Allen et al. reported one-third of master’s-level school counselors received no preparation for crisis intervention, and 57% felt not at all or minimally prepared for

Authors’ Note:

Casey A. Barrio Minton, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor and Cheyenne Pease-Carter, Ph.D., was a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counseling & Higher Education at the University of North Texas. Cheyenne Pease-Carter is now in practice in Yuma, Arizona. Address all correspondence concerning this manuscript to Dr. Casey A. Barrio Minton, 1155 Union Circle #310829, Denton, TX 76203-5017 or Casey.Barrio@unt.edu. This research was made possible by a grant from the University of North Texas.
crisis intervention. Similarly, Wachter reported that nearly 30% of practicing school counselors had no training regarding suicide, and nearly 70% had no training regarding school or gang violence. Most school counselors indicated some accurate knowledge of suicide risk factors and intervention steps (King, 2000); however, only 38% of school counselors believed they could recognize a student at risk for suicide (King et al., 1999). Although limited to school counselors’ experiences, these reports raise concerns regarding the status of crisis preparation in counselor education curricula.

Ethically, a counselor must operate within his or her scope of practice while protecting clients from harm (American Counseling Association, 2005); however, the daily demands of counseling practice and possible inadequacies in the crisis curriculum may require counselors to stretch beyond both comfort levels and scopes of practice on a regular basis. Although practitioner-oriented resources regarding practicalities of crisis intervention abound, attention to crisis preparation in the counselor education literature is limited. Nearly all attention has been focused on school counselor perceptions of training (e.g. Allen et al., 2002; King et al., 1999; Wachter, 2006), the impact of crisis situations on counselors (e.g. Foster & McAdams, 1999), or very specific preparation or supervision methods (e.g. Juhnke, 1994; McGlothin, Rainey, & Kindsvatter, 2005).

The 2009 Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Standards highlighted the growing need for attention to crisis across the curriculum and include sustained attention to crisis intervention. Professional Orientation/Ethical Practice, Human Growth and Development, and Helping Relationships core areas specify the need for knowledge related to crisis, emergency, disaster, trauma, and/or psychological first aid strategies. In addition, students in all specialty areas are expected to demonstrate understanding of the potential impact of crises, emergencies, or disaster on one’s population of interest and knowledge of crisis intervention with one’s population of interest. Five of six specialty areas have standards regarding understanding emergency management and crisis response roles within one’s setting and ability to assess and manage suicide risk. The Addiction and Clinical Mental Health standards further specify the need for in-depth crisis intervention preparation and assessment skills related to substance use, danger to others, risk for
suicide or other self-inflicted harm, and co-occurring mental disorders.

Formal studies regarding the nature and content of crisis preparation is absent in the literature. Uncertainty exists as to whether this silence reflects lack of activity or simply a lack of dialogue. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to illuminate current practices and trends regarding crisis preparation via examination of crisis preparation practices in CACREP-accredited master’s programs in general and crisis counseling courses in particular. Our primary research questions were the following:

1. When, where, and to what extent do CACREP-accredited counselor education programs address crisis intervention in general and track-specific curricula?
2. When crisis intervention courses are offered, what course content, objectives, and methods do counselor educators employ?

**Method**

**Participants**

The population of interest was CACREP-accredited master’s degree programs. Participants were 52 program coordinators or designated faculty contacts who provided program-level information on survey instrumentation. Nearly one-half (48.1%) of participating programs required 48 hours for graduation, one-quarter (28.8%) required 60 hours, and 23.1% required some other number of credit hours for graduation. All programs had at least one track for which they maintained CACREP-accreditation at the time of data collection. Programs reported the following accredited tracks: school (84.6%), community (71.2%), mental health (21.2%), counselor education (21.2%), marital, couples, and family (13.5%), college (9.6%), student affairs (7.7%), and career (5.8%).

Participants in the content analysis portion of the study included 12 faculty members who were responsible for teaching a crisis counseling course in their CACREP-accredited programs. These participants represented programs in 12 different states in the Southern (n = 8), North Central (n = 2), Rocky Mountain (n = 1), and Western (n = 1) regions of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision.

**Procedures and Instrumentation**

Upon Institutional Review Board approval, contact information was obtained for program coordinators in each of the 200 entry-level programs accredited...
 STATUS OF CRISIS PREPARATION

by CACREP for Academic Year 2006-2007. Personalized invitations to complete an electronic survey were sent via email to each program coordinator. Invitations contained information regarding the study, methods for ensuring anonymity, and a request that program coordinators complete survey materials on behalf of their program or forward to a contact who would be able to complete the request. Personalized reminders were sent one week and two weeks after the initial request. Of the 200 initial emails, 195 were deliverable; the process yielded a response rate of 26% (n = 52).

Participants in the first part of the study completed researcher-designed instrumentation that requested basic descriptive information including tracks for which the program was accredited and credit hours required for graduation. Participants were asked to identify the timing of crisis preparation within the program curriculum, to identify courses within the CACREP core and specialty tracks that included attention to crisis intervention, and to estimate the number of clock hours the average master’s graduate receives in crisis preparation. We asked participants whether the program offered a course or workshop in crisis intervention. Programs offering a crisis course were asked to indicate whether the course was required or elective and whether the course was one, two, or three semester credit hours.

In total, 24 participants in phase one indicated that their program offered a course in crisis counseling, and 18 provided usable contact information. During phase two of the study, we sent personalized requests for participation including information regarding the study, methods for ensuring confidential review of materials, and a request that individuals send electronic copies of their most recent crisis counseling syllabi to the researcher for content analysis. Reminder emails were sent one week and two weeks after the initial request. This process yielded 12 unique syllabi and a response rate of 66.67% for part two of the study. Upon receipt of syllabi, a research assistant removed all identifying information and assigned each syllabus a code number.

Next, we compiled a list of course objectives, content, and instructional methods for all syllabi and utilized content analysis to identify themes. At the time of data collection and analysis, no consensus document had been published regarding crisis counseling competencies, and the 2009 CACREP standards had yet to be released. Thus, the first author grouped
stems into themes without a priori assumptions regarding findings. As a validity check, the second author categorized the lists of objectives, content, and instructional methods using the themes and definitions identified by the first researcher.

Results

Research Question 1: Placement, Timing, and Extent of Crisis Coverage

Most programs indicated that didactic preparation for crisis first occurred prior to practicum (76.9%, n = 40), although many indicated that preparation occurred during practicum (61.5%, n = 32) and internship (50.0%, n = 26). Four programs (7.7%) indicated that the program included no preparation for crisis intervention. Table 1 contains data regarding the percentage of programs that reported including crisis preparation in curricula for core and track-specific courses. As displayed in the table, programs most often offered crisis preparation in core areas such as helping relationships and professional identity, and most track-specific courses included attention to crisis intervention. Of the programs with corresponding accredited tracks in our sample, 100% (n = 5) included crisis intervention in college-specific courses, and 79.5% (n = 35) of school courses included attention to crisis. Programs accredited for mental health (63.6%, n = 7) and community (62.2%, n = 23) tracks also tended to include crisis preparation in their track-specific course curricula.

Table 1

Programs including Crisis Intervention in Course Curricula (n = 52)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core courses</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Specialty course coverage</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping relationships</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional identity</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>Marital, couple, family</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and cultural diversity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human growth and development</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>Offer crisis course</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career development</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Coverage in other core areas</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Coverage in other electives</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Only programs with accredited tracks were included in specialty course analyses.
STATUS OF CRISIS PREPARATION

Just under one-half (46.2%, n = 24) of programs offered a course dedicated to crisis counseling. Of the courses offered, nearly all (83.3%, n = 20) were 3-credit hours, and two-thirds (66.7%, n = 16) were elective. Four programs (16.7%) required the course for all students, and 4 programs (16.7%) required the course for some students but not all students.

When asked to estimate the number of clock hours in crisis preparation with which an average master’s student graduated, program representatives presented estimates that ranged from 0 to 50 hours. The mean number of hours estimated was 13.26 (SD = 12.54), and the median number of clock hours was 8.5. Most programs indicated that students received 0 - 5 hours (32.35%, n = 11) or 6 - 10 hours (29.41%, n = 10) of crisis preparation. Several programs reported a greater degree of coverage including 11 - 15 hours (5.88%, n = 2), 16 - 20 hours (17.65%, n = 6), or 21 or more hours (14.71%, n = 5).

Research Question 2: Content Analysis of Crisis Intervention Courses

Course objectives. Overall, crisis course syllabi included 93 unique course objectives that were categorized within one of four areas: (1) fundamental or background information, (2) ethical, legal, or professional issues, (3) general crisis intervention skills, and (4) specific crisis intervention skills.

Ten syllabi contained a total of 23 (24.73%) course objectives regarding fundamental or background information related to crisis and crisis intervention. These objectives tended to involve developing knowledge regarding crisis theory (e.g. “Students will increase their awareness of modern crisis intervention theories, concept of crisis, dynamics of the resolution process”), identifying characteristics of various types of crises (e.g. “Be able to identify the common characteristics of most crisis situations”), and understanding the nature of crisis counseling (e.g. “Be able to differentiate between crisis case handling & longer-term therapy”).

Fourteen (15.05%) objectives involved ethical, legal, and professional issues. Seven syllabi included objectives regarding understanding ethical, legal, or professional responsibilities related to crisis intervention (e.g. “Students will consider the ethical and legal challenges of crisis intervention”). Five syllabi included objectives regarding understanding impact of crisis on the caregiver, developing personal coping strategies related to crisis
intervention, or recognizing signs of burnout (e.g. “Learn about effective coping strategies for crisis management, and develop personal resources”).

Twenty-three (24.73%) course objectives made reference to understanding and enacting general crisis intervention skills. Seven syllabi included objectives regarding development of crisis intervention skills (e.g. “To practice various crisis intervention techniques with typical crisis situations”). Seven syllabi included objectives regarding development of knowledge and skills regarding crisis intervention models (e.g. “Be able to understand and implement the 6 step crisis model for a variety of crisis situations”).

Twenty-seven (29.67%) course objectives were designed around developing specific crisis intervention skills. In particular, 7 syllabi included objectives regarding the development of suicide assessment and intervention skills (e.g. “To develop counseling intervention skills appropriate for use in suicide and emergency risk situations”), and 5 instructors wrote more general objectives regarding risk or triage assessment (e.g. “Understand how to complete a triage assessment for a variety of crisis situations”). Four syllabi included specific mention of coordination or collaboration skills for use during times of crisis (e.g. “competency in communicating with parents/guardians, teachers, and other professionals concerning children’s needs during times of crisis”). Four syllabi included objectives regarding developing skills to respond to a variety of specific crises (e.g. “Students will learn how to apply theory/skills to crises situations, including: suicide, sexual assault/rape, natural and manmade disasters, personal loss, basic needs attainment, and terminal illness”).

Content areas covered. Content areas covered were gleaned from course schedules provided within syllabi and tended to reflect the objectives discussed previously. One syllabus did not include specific attention to content areas covered, so the following analyses include data from only 11 syllabi. Nearly all course schedules included an introduction to crisis intervention (90.90%, n = 10), suicide assessment and intervention (90.90%, n = 10), and crises related to abuse or victimization (81.82%, n = 9). Seven syllabi (63.64%) included attention to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Approximately one-half attended to cultural issues (54.55%, n = 6), crisis intervention models (54.55%, n = 6), crises related to violence (54.55%, n = 6), and
ethical and legal issues (45.45%, n = 5). Approximately one-third (36.36%, n = 4) made specific mention of crisis plans, earmarked time to discuss disaster, and dedicated time to discuss self-care and burnout. Although these courses largely represented electives and were offered prior to the release of the 2009 CACREP standards, Table 2 includes connections between content areas covered and standards for entry-level programs.

**Table 2**

*Frequency of References to Key CACREP 2009 Standards in Crisis Course Calendars (n = 11)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Standards</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to crisis</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide assessment and intervention</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse/victimization</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>81.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural issues related to crisis</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis intervention models</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical and legal issues related to crisis</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis plans</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-care and burnout related to crisis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* IIG = General entry-level standards, AC = Addiction Counseling, CMHC = Clinical Mental Health Counseling, MCFC = Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling, SC = School Counseling, SACC = Student Affairs and College Counseling.
Instructional methods. Descriptions of course formats varied; however, all 12 descriptions of course format or instructional methods made mention of an emphasis on discussion and processing. About one-half mentioned role-play and simulations (58.33%, n = 7), live or videotaped demonstrations (58.33%, n = 7), and lecture (50.00%, n = 6) as instructional methods.

Syllabi included 15 different required texts, and one-half (50.00%, n = 6) of instructors required James and Gilliland’s (2005) Crisis Intervention Strategies. Two instructors utilized Kanel’s (2007) A Guide to Crisis Intervention, and two instructors required Myer’s (2001) Assessment for Crisis Intervention. Echterling, Presbury, and McKee’s (2005) Crisis Intervention: Promoting Resilience and Resolution in Troubled Times and Wiger and Harworski’s (2003) Essentials of Crisis Counseling and Intervention were each used by one instructor. The remaining 10 unique texts were specific to a particular intervention modality (e.g. cognitive), population (e.g. school, family), or issue (e.g. body memory, disaster).

Syllabi included a total of 51 graded assignments; however, most assignments could be classified in one of six areas. The most common assignments included examinations or quizzes and were required by 10 (83.33%) instructors. Three-quarters (75.00%, n = 9) of instructors required completion of an annotated bibliography or research paper regarding an aspect of crisis or crisis intervention. Two-thirds (66.67%, n = 8) of instructors required students to participate in graded role-plays or simulations. Five (41.67%) instructors prompted students to complete journals or personal growth reflections as part of the course experience. One-third (33.33%, n = 4) of instructors required students to submit a crisis-related case study, and most requested that students use movie or television characters as prompts for the case study. Similarly, 4 (33.33%) instructors required students to complete an oral presentation regarding a specific type of crisis, and 3 of these instructors required students to incorporate a role-play or simulation into the presentation. Only 3 (25.00%) instructors required field-based experiences as part of the crisis course. One required students to observe school counselors and to evaluate a school crisis plan, another required students to visit a community agency that provides some sort of crisis intervention, and a third required 40 hours of crisis volunteer work or participation in the production of a crisis video.
Discussion

Content, timing, and placement of crisis preparation in counselor education curricula along with the content and methods employed within courses dedicated to crisis intervention were the focus of this study. Less than one-half of responding programs offered a course in crisis intervention, and few programs required a crisis intervention course even when the course was offered. Thus, counselor education students receive the majority of crisis preparation during helping relationships, professional identity, and track-specific courses. Most students received attention to crisis preparation prior to practicum; however, nearly one-quarter of programs only covered crisis intervention practices once students began seeing clients in internship. Although these practices may reflect an expectation that students learn about crisis in the field, such practices raise ethical concerns regarding appropriate modeling for students and safety of clients even within closely supervised settings. Finally, most participants indicated that their programs dedicated relatively little clock time to crisis preparation. Of those who responded to the prompt, nearly one-third indicated that students receive 0 - 5 clock hours of preparation (less than 2 class periods), and nearly one-third indicated that students receive 6 - 10 clock hours (2 - 4 class periods) dedicated to crisis over the course of their program. Given the enhanced nature of attention in the 2009 CACREP Standards, many programs may need to increase attention to crisis, disaster, and trauma substantially in the years to come.

Although available in less than half of counseling programs and offered as electives, crisis course syllabi tended to address most of the 2009 CACREP Standards related to crisis. However, attention to the developmental impact of crisis or disaster did not emerge at all in the content analysis, and only one-third of syllabi examined included attention to disaster. Therefore, courses dedicated to crisis may need to expand definitions of crisis to include disaster and emergency preparedness to be consistent with new standards. The crisis courses analyzed tended to reflect a small to moderate degree of focus on foundational information and attention to ethical and legal issues and a moderate to large degree of focus on development of crisis-specific skill sets. The relatively low amount of focus on ethical and legal issues may be related to our finding of widespread coverage of crisis-related topics in
Professional Identity core courses. Instructional methods tended to be interactive, and a very large proportion of assignments involved use of case studies, role plays, and simulations to achieve course objectives. Thus, it appears that those who specialize in crisis preparation view interaction and practice as critical to the development of crisis competency.

Limitations

Despite personalized attempts to boost our response rate, only one-quarter of CACREP-accredited counselor education programs are represented in this study. Furthermore, some participants may have had limited understanding of practices within their programs or may have responded based on personal opinions rather than those which would be represented by their program faculty as a whole. In addition, the content analysis included syllabi from just 12 crisis intervention courses, and the accuracy of the content analysis is limited to the accuracy of the syllabi presented for analysis. Just as it is possible that courses included attention to content areas not listed in syllabi, it is possible that content listed in syllabi were not actually covered during the course.

Implications

Counselors. Professional counselors may utilize results of this study to consider their own crisis preparation experiences, expectations for crisis intervention in their practice settings, and opportunities to continuing education and development. In particular, counselors might construct a list of crisis situations commonly encountered in their practice settings and identify the knowledge and skills that would help them to respond to these crises in an optimal manner. Because there may be some crises situations that counselors do not anticipate (e.g. disasters, participation on emergency response teams), counselors may consult existing resources regarding crisis intervention competencies (i.e. CACREP, 2009; Engels, Barrio Minton, Ray, & Associates, 2010; Wachter, Barrio Minton, & Clemons, 2008) to ensure comprehensive attention to areas for professional development. Finally, we recommend that each counselor construct a crisis competency professional development plan. This professional development plan might include action steps such as commitment to self-study regarding specific dimensions of crisis intervention, attention to crisis competency development via continuing education workshops, or formation of peer-supervision groups related to crisis (Wachter et al., 2008).
Counselor educators. Results of the content analysis may be used by counselor educators who wish to develop crisis intervention courses and by those who are looking to integrate crisis objectives or pedagogy into existing core and specialty courses. Program faculty may utilize our results to initiate discussion regarding the content and process of crisis preparation within their own programs. This discussion may include attention to the balance of delivery of didactic content (e.g. suicide risk factors) and development of crisis skills (e.g. practicing a suicide assessment) as well as exposure of students to crisis preparation throughout the curriculum. The 2009 CACREP Standards require an understanding of the impact of crisis on human growth and development; however, few programs reported addressing crisis in the human development core area. Thus, programs may take this opportunity to revisit existing curricula to integrate crisis competencies and crisis intervention skills into an array of new areas. In addition, the relative lack of attention to disaster in crisis courses is inconsistent with CACREP’s emerging focus on disaster and underscores the need for enhanced attention to this area in the coming years.

Additional research is needed regarding content addressed and the ways in which counselor educators address crisis in core and track-specific courses. Studies regarding counselors’ classroom experiences with crisis preparation and field expectations for intervention may help to bridge the apparent disconnect between the needs expressed by practitioners in other studies (e.g. Allen et al., 2002; King et al., 1999; Wachter, 2006) and the practices reported by counselor educators in this study. As counselors and counselor educators develop a clearer vision of the crisis competencies necessary for effective counseling practice today, researchers may investigate the effectiveness of various approaches to crisis preparation on the development of crisis competencies.

References


The Multicultural Supervision Scale (MSS) was administered to 304 counselor educators and clinical supervisors across the United States. A three factor model comprising 39 items seemed to define the contours of the construct of multicultural issues in supervision. Three factors were defined as supervisory skills, supervisors’ attitudes and beliefs, as well as stereotypes toward diverse populations. The findings suggested the scores on the MSS were valid and reliable. Overall, the MSS provided an important initial step in developing an assessment in multicultural supervision with reasonable factor structure, internal consistency, and having scientific and applied utility.

Keywords: multicultural supervision, supervisor assessment

Since the 1990s, the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) recognized the importance of multiculturalism, pluralism, and diversification in counseling and psychology. The inclusion of multicultural standards in the respective codes of ethics calls all counselors and psychologists,
who are guild members, to meet the standards of multicultural counseling when providing services (ACA, 2005; APA, 2002).

Multicultural competencies are one of the key domains of professional competencies counselors need to possess (Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 1995). As a practitioner, the counselor is expected to demonstrate multicultural counseling through their work with clients and colleagues. Counselors attain competency through a combination of knowledge, experience, training, and supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). The process of supervision is central and essential to developing advanced counseling skills and in particular, multicultural counseling competencies. Thus, multicultural supervision is a necessary process that should assist supervisees’ comprehension of the influence of cultural issues on their personhood and in their clinical practice (Toporek, Ortega-Villalobos, & Pope-Davis, 2004).

The ACA and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) encouraged counselors and counselor educators to monitor and increase their multicultural counseling competencies and skills in order to adequately provide services to all clients. Yet, a gap exists between what counselor educators and supervisors believe is necessary and the production of credible research. Specifically lacking are an agreed upon definition and elements of multicultural supervision competencies, as well as no empirically validated manner in which to measure multicultural supervision.

Quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to investigate perceptions of supervisees in cross-cultural and multicultural supervision. The findings from these studies suggested that the main task of supervisors was to address cultural issues between the client and counselor as well as the supervisee and supervisor (Constantine, 1997; Constantine, 2001; D’Andrea & Daniels, 1997; Duan & Rochlke, 2001; Hird et al., 2001; Leong & Wagner, 1994; Toporek et al., 2004). These researchers also noted in order for supervisors to be able to address cultural issues in supervision, the supervisors need to be cognizant of their personal levels of knowledge, attitudes, and skills in the areas of multicultural supervision competencies. These findings, in particular, influenced researchers who attempted to create instruments to measure knowledge, attitudes, and skills of supervision in multicultural supervision.
Wong and Wong (1999) first developed the Multicultural Supervision Competencies Questionnaire (MSCQ). In this measure the authors attempted to measure supervisors’ knowledge, attitudes, and skills when conducting multicultural supervision. The MSCQ, however, focused on only the role race and ethnicity play in supervision and may be less widely used. Not long after the development of the MSCQ, Pope-Davis, Toporek, and Ortega (1999) proposed the Multicultural Supervision Scale (MSC) later called the Multicultural Supervision Inventory (MSI). The authors asserted the MSI measured other domains in multiculturalism including gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, socioeconomic status, and disabilities (Pope-Davis, Toporek, & Ortega-Villalobos, 2003). Although the authors claimed the MSI measured an inclusive definition of multiculturalism and demonstrated reliability, the MSI has poor validity both in exploratory and confirmatory studies, and thus, the MSI may not be widely used in practice or research. Several researchers in the area of supervision called for the need to quantify the dimensions of multicultural supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Dressel, Consoli, Kim, & Atkinson, 2007; Pope-Davis et al., 2003). These researchers identified a lack of instruments that measure multicultural supervision for practical application in research, practice, and training. An investigation of supervisor and supervisee’s perceptions in multicultural supervision is critical to improve the multicultural supervision competence of supervisors and enrich the multicultural supervision experience of supervisees and ultimately clients. Thus, a need exists to clearly identify the critical dimensions of competent multicultural supervision and from those dimensions to develop a valid and reliable multicultural instrument for supervisors. These instruments could help supervisors, researchers, and educators translate somewhat unobservable attitudes, knowledge, and skills of supervisors in multicultural supervision into quantitative dimensions that assist supervisors to identify their levels of multicultural competence in supervision.

The purpose of this study was to explore the dimensions of competent multicultural supervision through the development and initial validation of the Multicultural Supervision Scale (MSS). This is the first step in the process of clarifying the construct and components of the measure. The intent of the MSS is to assess supervisors’ multicultural competencies in a variety of personal dimensions that
include ethnicity, cultural heritage, gender, sexual orientation, age, spiritual belief, socioeconomic status, body image, and disabilities. We believe the MSS has the potential to create positive changes in supervision and counselor training. In addition, the MSS could assist supervisors as they develop supervisory environments that facilitate the growth of multicultural understandings and accountability in themselves and their supervisees.

Method

Scale Development

The process of item development provides the foundation for quality scale development. The procedures detailed here describe the process from construct conceptualization through item development and pilot testing. This study began with a comprehensive review of the literature in the area of general supervision skills and practice and specific expectations for multicultural supervision competencies. We sought to identify the essential attitudes, knowledge, and skills required of a multiculturally competent supervisor. Once these essential elements were identified numerous items were written to reflect the content and meaning of each identified area. As is consistent with item development theory (Crocker & Algina, 1986), more items than necessary were constructed to over sample in each domain and assure that these items revealed as many aspects of the domain as possible. In scale development, the generation of a set of items that clearly and accurately represent the construct is important (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). Four experts in the field of multicultural counseling and supervision reviewed and evaluated an initial item pool of the MSS. An expert in the field of multicultural counseling and supervision was defined as one who had scholarly works in the areas of multicultural counseling and supervision. Worthington and Whittaker (2006) suggested expert review as a critical procedure for scale development to ensure content evidence of an instrument. Items were retained in the scale when (a) at least two of the four experts generally agreed to either to add, remove, or modify an item; (b) when there appeared to be agreement, yet it was unclear, the primary investigator contacted the experts for follow-up and clarification to resolve any ambiguities.

After the MSS was reviewed by the experts, the primary investigator also conducted a pilot study of the MSS with 50 counselor educators and supervisors to ensure clarity, conciseness, readability, distinctiveness, and content reflection of the
scale’s purpose. The criterion for inclusion of the participants’ suggestions was at least 50% of participants agreed on the same comments. After consideration, items in the MSS that did not demonstrate clarity, conciseness, readability, distinctiveness, and content reflection were modified or deleted.

Participants

A total of 345 individuals participated in this study. Of these 345 individuals, 304 completed surveys. The minimum amount of data for factor analysis was satisfied, with a final sample size of 304 (using listwise deletion). The sample (N = 304) comprised counselor educators and clinical supervisors across the United States. The sample was predominately Caucasian (75%), female (74.6%), 31-50 years old (57.9%), Christian (42.4%), and identified themselves as attracted to members of the opposite sex (79.3%). The self-identified ethnicity of participants included 75% Caucasian, 8.9% African American, 4.9% Hispanic or Latino, 2.6% Asian, 2.6% Asian American, 1.0% American Indian, and 4.3% Multiethnic. A majority of participants were from the Midwest United States (24%), worked in university setting (52.3%), and had an individual annual income of $50,001-70,000 (34.5%). Half the participants had master’s degrees and the other half had doctoral degrees. Of the participants who held doctoral degrees a majority of participants (26%) held degrees in counselor education and supervision. Fifty percent of participants reported having provided clinical supervision from one to five years. The majority of participants (78%) had at least one multicultural course during graduate studies and 84.5% had at least one multicultural training experience after completing their graduate degrees.

Analyses and Results

Principal component analysis (PCA) was implemented as a statistical method to examine and determine the factor structures and content validity of the MSS based on two assumptions. First, the information drawn from the current literature in the field of counseling and supervision suggested that the construct of the MSS might be composed of several related dimensions. Second, our prior assumptions included a belief that the construct of multicultural supervision was multidimensional and subscales were likely to be highly correlated. A promax rotation was used as a factor extraction method. Prior to the analysis, the statistical assumptions for PCA were met. To examine the data
for adherence to the assumptions of PCA, the skewness and kurtosis were calculated. All items showed relatively high skewness (from -2.00 to 2.51) and moderate kurtosis (from -0.78 to 4.98).

Ten, five, three, and one factor solutions were examined, using a promax rotation. A three factor solution, however, was chosen as it explained 35.016% of the total variance. The scree plot was in an elbow shape, which clearly distinguished the analysis from PCA. From this analysis, it was evident that the MSS was not a unidimensional construct and thus the three-factor model was supported due to its clarity of structure and interpretability.

Items were retained based on the following criteria for factor extraction: (a) eigenvalues above 1.0 from the correlation matrices, (b) an elbow shaped scree plot, and (c) a minimum item load of .30. Any item that loaded at less than .30 or failed to load on any factor was excluded from further analysis. The researchers also examined items that loaded on two or more factors for the degree of contribution and congruence with the identified factor. Items were retained when there was a clear relationship and were dropped when the item content described a different construct from the factor. At the end of this analysis, two items double loaded, in factors one and two: I encourage supervisees to discuss issues related to their body image when this issue for a client comes up in supervision and I model how a supervisee might address misunderstanding regarding language with a client. Both items were retained in the MSS because the content of both items were congruent with and contributed to the identified factor.

As a result of the factor extraction, a three factor solution comprising 39 items seemed to define the contours of the construct of multicultural issues in supervision. Based on the interpretability of the components extracted from PCA and the eigenvalues, three factors were retained: supervisory skills (14 items), supervisors’ attitudes and beliefs (11 items), and stereotypes toward diverse populations (14 items). Table 1 presents the factor loadings from the pattern matrix for the three-factor model of the MSS.

Factor I (Supervisory skills) contained 14 items that accounted for 19.97% of the total variance. The factor loadings ranged from .36 to .84. Items comprised in this factor described multicultural competence that supervisors demonstrated through their supervisory skills. These skills involved providing instruction, consulta-
### Table 1

*Pattern Matrix for the Three-Factor Model of the 39-Item Multicultural Supervision Scale (MSS)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can discuss issues regarding ethnicity with my supervisees without hesitation.</td>
<td>.842</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I educate supervisees to understand the impact of disabilities on clients’ lives.</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I discuss the intersection of the client’s culture with that of the supervisee’s.</td>
<td>.752</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When supervisees discuss people with disabilities, I help supervisees understand that these clients struggle because of their disabilities.</td>
<td>.730</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intervene when I hear supervisees joke about clients of small stature.</td>
<td>.653</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I educate my supervisees about the potential impact of gender dynamics in the counseling relationship.</td>
<td>.630</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can anticipate when my supervising style is inappropriate for a culturally different supervisee.</td>
<td>.585</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage supervisees to discuss issues related to their body image when this issue for a client comes up in supervision.</td>
<td>.563</td>
<td>.337</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I model the process of exploration of gender stereotypes with supervisees.</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I introduce the aging concept to supervisees when they encounter elderly clients.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.495</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask supervisees to discuss how their socioeconomic status (SES) impacts their view of the client.</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I model how a supervisee might address misunderstanding regarding language with a client.</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>.352</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I explore the degrees of discomfort a supervisee may experience with clients with disabilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.405</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage supervisees to confront their own attitudes toward clients who have physical disabilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.357</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the role power differentials play in counseling and supervision.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe my culture influences how I view the supervisee and the client.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with my supervisee about his or her spiritual beliefs is inappropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I talk about parallel process in supervision.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the pressure for some women to be thin.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisees’ spiritual beliefs are private and should not be discussed in supervision.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of the intersection of gender and power in personal relationships.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.581</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (Continued)
Pattern Matrix for the Three-Factor Model of the 39-Item Multicultural Supervision Scale (MSS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors can role model cultural competence by ignoring differences.</td>
<td>-0.541</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe a good supervisor requires very little training in multicultural issues.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.493</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I caution my supervisees about discussing religion with clients because it is not an accepted form of psychotherapy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors with physical, visual, and hearing limitations should serve only clients who have a similar disability because they are better able to empathize.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hesitate to mention a language barrier between my supervisee and myself because I am afraid people would accuse me being culturally insensitive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is useless to teach wealthy supervisees about what it is like to be poor.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisees who have the same ethnic background as me are easier to supervise.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From my experience, I believe one gender is better at counseling than the other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I assume supervisees of a particular ethnicity will be late for supervision.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors with strong religious beliefs do not make good counselors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe everyone should have a religion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For me, I think older supervisees have a difficult time memorizing information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe younger supervisees are often immature.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From my supervisory experience, I know thinner people are generally happier than overweight people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisees who have English as a second language cannot effectively counsel clients because of the language barrier.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few counselors need direct instruction on their counseling skills once they have completed graduate school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about cultural issues is uncomfortable and I avoid doing so.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not want to discuss issues related to body size and image.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

tion, support, and evaluation to supervisees to assist them in dealing with multicultural issues in counseling. Instruction included providing intervention and modeling clinical skills used in the counseling relationship. Support included providing interpersonal support to and encouraging self-exploration in supervisees. These items represented the integration of general supervisory skills and multicultural competencies of supervisors in providing supervision.

Factor II (Supervisors’ Attitudes and Beliefs) contained 11 items that accounted for 8.45% of the total variance. The factor loadings ranged from .35 to .75. Items included in this factor described the supervisors’ attitudes and beliefs toward multicultural issues underpinning their interaction with supervisees. Attitudes were described as an inclination, disposition, and orientation regarding cultural issues. Beliefs referred to a tenet, opinion, or conviction in the existence of cultural issues that impacted supervision. This factor represented both the covert and overt attitudes and beliefs represented by supervisors’ actions in supervisory relationships.

Factor III (Stereotypes Toward Diverse Populations) contained 14 items accounting for 6.60% of the total variance. The factor loadings ranged from .31 to .73. Items contained in this factor described the stereotypes toward diverse populations. The stereotypes referred to a generalization, which usually exaggerated or oversimplified and were often offensive. These stereotypes underlie supervisors’ assumptions and expectations influencing the supervision environment and supervisors’ efforts to be culturally sensitive as well as to train supervisees to be culturally sensitive.

In addition, internal consistency of the MSS was examined using Cronbach’s alpha. The alphas of the overall scale were moderate (α = .76). The first factor, supervisory skills, exhibited strong internal consistency scores (α = .87). The second factor, supervisors’ attitudes and beliefs, exhibited moderate internal consistency scores (α = .78). The third factor, stereotypes toward diverse populations, also exhibited moderate internal consistency scores (α = .76).

The results indicated there was a negative correlation between supervisory skills (Factor 1) and stereotypes toward diverse populations (Factor 3), may mean that when individuals who endorsed greater supervisory skills also endorsed fewer items that identified or agreed with stereotypes toward diverse populations. The results also indicated there was a
negative correlation between supervisors’ attitudes and beliefs (Factor 2) and stereotypes toward diverse population (Factor 3), which seemed to indicate that individuals with higher scores on the subscale of supervisors’ attitudes and beliefs were also likely to have lower scores on the subscale of stereotypes toward diverse population.

In addition, there was a positive correlation between supervisory skills and supervisors’ attitudes and beliefs, which may indicate that higher scores in supervisory skills are likely to be present for individuals who also scored higher on supervisors’ attitudes and beliefs. Table 2 presents correlations between subscales of the MSS.

### Discussion

The increase of diversity in the U.S. population requires counselors to possess the multicultural counseling competencies (MCCs) in order to meet the needs of their clients. The counselors are bound by the ethical codes and responsibilities to effectively serve all individuals in culturally competent and sensitive ways. Ultimately, the responsibility rests with counselor educators and supervisors whose primary professional and ethical charge is to protect clients’ welfare by monitoring the training and services provided by trainees and post degree practitioners. Thus, for those who train and supervise counselors and mental health professionals, to be culturally competent and to effectively work with diverse service recipients is critical.

The MSS was administered to 304 counselor educators and clinical supervisors across the U.S. The invitation to participate in this research was extended electronically to over 3,500 individuals via professional organization and institutional listservs. Three hundred and ninety individuals visited the survey within a month of data collection and over 300 individuals were selected as participants. Because

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors’ Attitudes and Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td>.476</td>
<td>-.271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes toward Diverse Populations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
there was no sufficient resource available to estimate the number of recipients who were supervisors, the researchers were unable to definitively identify non-response rate.

Survey-research specialists employ a variety of strategies to increase response rates (Dillman, 2000). For example, Dillman, Eltinge, Groves, & Little (2002) suggested simple and attractive questionnaire designs, persuasive communications to encourage participation, multiple follow-ups, and incentives for participation could increase response rates. Kraut et al. (2003) reviewed the methodological advantages and disadvantages of online psychological research. Response rates in online surveys were usually lower than those of comparable mail surveys. Kraut et al. suggested the samples might be equally generalizable if the researcher selected a population with narrowly distinct interests. In the development of the MSS, the primary investigator distributed the invitation message to groups of individuals that showed a potential interest in multicultural issues in counseling and supervision. Additionally, the primary investigator employed various approaches to increase participant response rates, which included designing a simple and attractive questionnaire, using persuasive communications to encourage participation, and conducting multiple follow-ups with participants. These procedures seemed to contribute to the large number of participants as 390 individuals visited the survey site during a one-month period.

The goal of constructing the MSS was to address a desperate need of an empirical measure for supervisors to assess their degrees of multicultural competencies. Because supervisors are an essential element in the training of culturally competent counselors, it is vital for supervisors to have some gauge of their personal supervisory cultural competence. Supervisors can explore and examine their level of their cultural competence by using the MSS because each item in the MSS was developed to measure supervisors’ cultural competence in a broader perspective including ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, cultural heritage, spirituality belief, socioeconomic status, disabilities, and body image.

The area of sexual orientation failed to load in any of three factors. The researchers wrote most of the items related to sexual orientation in straightforward manner (i.e. *Working with gay supervisees makes me uncomfortable, I can tell which supervisees are gay by observing their how they talk*). This occurrence might be a result of a social desirability effect defined as the phenomenon in which participants
were inclined to present themselves in a social acceptable manner (Weisberg, Krosnick, & Bowen, 1996). Although we attempted to reduce the likelihood of social desirability effect by addressing confidentiality of the data collection and analysis process as well as emphasizing via the informed consent that participation was voluntary, the social desirability appeared to be an issue in this aspect of the MSS. The final MSS contained 39 Likert-type self-assessed questions with three subscales including supervisory skills, supervisors’ attitudes and beliefs, and stereotypes toward diverse populations.

**Supervisory Skills**

The content of the items loaded on the first factor described a supervisor’s abilities and skills related to the modeling, instruction, education and intervention with counselors in the areas of multicultural counseling. Items loaded in this factor seemed to measure skills that supervisors need to provide quality supervision. These items capture the notion that supervisors need to be able to initiate multicultural conversation and address multicultural issues in supervision on a wide array of client variables.

Toporek et al. (2004) suggested supervisors should communicate their willingness to initiate cultural issues in the initial supervision sessions. Supervisors should use supervision as the crucible in which supervisees could safely experience and improve their multicultural awareness. Dressel et al. (2007) found the most significant supervisor behavior that contributed to successful supervision, in which supervisory relationships were strong, was the creation of a safe environment for discussion of multicultural issues. Thus, supervisors need to be able to assess their willingness and capacity to discuss emotionally charged or delicate issues (e.g. ethnicity, spirituality belief, socioeconomic status) with supervisees. These abilities demonstrated an essential quality of effective supervisors (Barnett, Cornish, Goodyear, & Lichtenberg, 2007). Effective supervisors seemed to be aware of their attitudes and beliefs and of the impact of their attitudes and beliefs on supervisees and clients they serve. Thus, supervisors are expected to have the abilities to initiate, address, and facilitate multicultural issues in supervision to serve both trainees and clients. Skilled supervisors initiate discussion about culture as a first step of building trust and mutual respect in supervisory relationship (Goodyear & Guzzardo, 2000).
Supervisors’ Attitudes and Beliefs

Attitudes and beliefs are critical in counseling and supervision. Individuals hold a variety of values constructed and influenced by the cultures to which they belong. When individuals encounter culturally-based interactions, they often find themselves struggling with particular concepts that conflict with or challenge their worldviews. The items in this factor appeared to measure supervisors’ attitudes and beliefs toward multicultural issues underpinning their interaction with supervisees. These items capture the importance of supervisors’ awareness. Supervisors should be aware of their own attitudes and beliefs in order to effectively serve supervisees and clients. This subscale in the MSS assists supervisors to identify their attitudes and beliefs regarding multiculturalism and diverse cultural groups.

Hird et al. (2000) suggested the supervisee, supervisor, and client bring multiple perspectives of their cultural beings into the counseling and supervision process. These cultural perspectives are beyond race or gender and need to include personal and cultural intersecting identities (Robinson, 1999). Thus, supervision experiences should provide a space for the integration of numerous aspects of the client’s and counselor’s identity that emphasizes the role of culture and context within the supervision process. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) requires accredited programs in counselor preparation, clinical supervision, research, training, and practice to focus on or infuse multicultural issues into curricular and field-based experiences (CACREP, 2009). Scholars agreed that self-awareness was central for supervisors in order to be effective in working with supervisees and clients (Constantine, 2001; D’Andrea & Daniels, 1997; Duan & Rochlke, 2001; Hird et al., 2001; Pope-Davis et al., 2003; Toporek et al., 2004), yet little research had focused on the potential deficits of supervisors. It seems reasonable that supervisors must be expected to explore, examine, and manage their own attitudes and beliefs that might interfere with supervisory relationships (ACA, 2005) in order to train and supervise the next generation of counselors and supervisors.

Stereotypes Toward Diverse Populations

Clients, counselors, and supervisors may form judgments or beliefs about particular groups of people without having accurate information about them. These judgments or beliefs then provide the foundation for one’s actions and thus can create potential psychological harm to
individuals who are victims of these uninformed judgments or prejudices. Multicultural counseling competencies are a critical standard of the counseling profession and serve as a guide to professional and ethical conduct. Similar to counselors, clinical supervisors are also expected to be culturally competent both overtly and covertly.

The last subscale of the MSS described stereotypes toward diverse populations. The items loaded on this factor appeared to describe assumptions and expectations based on gross generalizations, which were typically over exaggerated or oversimplified and often offensive. Daniels, D’Andrea, and Kyung Kim (1999) found cross-cultural supervision was complex because it potentially involved multiple layers of racism and oppression. These authors recommended that it was important for supervisors to examine their own prejudice toward minority groups and cultural issues that occurred in supervision. Nilsson and Duan (2007) suggested perceived prejudice was associated with role ambiguity and role conflict of supervisees in supervision. The authors recommended supervisors should create a supervision experience that fit with supervisees’ cultural experiences in order to facilitate their learning process. The items in the MSS were written with assumption that the role ambiguity and conflict could be assuaged by supervisory directness, clarification and initiation of culturally relevant dialogue. As mentioned above, supervisors who engage in this behavior, even unwittingly, provide a non-productive approach to counselor supervision and are often viewed as interpersonally and culturally offensive.

**Correlations Between Subscales**

Overall, correlations between subscales appeared to be reasonable and supported by literature in the field of counseling and supervision. Although the findings did not demonstrate a strong correlation between subscales, the findings indicated there was a relationship between subscales of the MSS. These findings provide initial empirical evidence that supervisory skills, supervisors’ attitudes and beliefs, and stereotypes toward diverse populations are correlated.

**Comparing the MSS to Existing Multicultural Supervision Assessments**

The MSCQ and MSI (see Wong & Wong, 1990 and Pope-Davis et al., 2003) are two existing assessments in the field of multicultural supervision. However, these two instruments seem to demonstrate a lack of rigorous methodology in terms of instrument design, development, and validation procedures. Given the weaknesses and
incompleteness of these two existing scales, it is clear, that for multicultural supervision research and practice to move forward, a reformulated scale that includes a broader measure of supervisors’ multicultural competencies and rigorous instrument design procedures and standards is needed.

Like the MSCQ and MSI, the MSS shares common theoretical foundations of multicultural counseling competencies including the domain of attitudes, knowledge, and skills. However, unlike, MSCQ and MSI, the MSS was initially developed and will continue to be subjected to a thorough and systematic examination of the multicultural supervision content to ensure the content validity. The development of the MSS strictly followed the steps in the scale development. Worthington and Whittaker (2006) identified that it was essential for researchers to follow steps and procedures in the scale development because following these steps and procedures helped strengthen the content validity of a scale.

Although the reliability of the MSS both overall scale and each subscale did not demonstrate a strong internal consistency reliability of the overall scale as the MSCQ and MSI, the MSS exhibited fairly strong internal consistency reliability in the first subscale and moderate internal consistency reliability in the other two subscales. In social sciences, psychometric measurements that have internal consistency score above .70 are generally considered reliable (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Murphy & Davidshofer, 2001; Thomas & Hersen, 2003).

Limitations

The MSS must be utilized within the context of the study’s limitations. The MSS is a self-report measure that, with further validation studies, may be useful in assessing the multicultural competencies of supervisors. Like other self-reported measurements, the MSS faces the issue regarding social desirability effect. The MSS aimed to measure the level of supervisors’ multicultural competencies. Each item in the MSS contains potentially provocative content regarding diversity and multiculturalism. As a result of completing the MSS, some participants might respond to questions in a socially desirable way. Although the researchers made an effort to manage the issue by assuring privacy of information, offering refusal to participate in the survey, and providing non-response options, it is difficult to avoid the phenomenon. In this study, we recognized the non-response issue and made an attempt to control a sample bias.
Because there was no manner in which to achieve an exact statistic or estimation regarding the clinical supervisor to counselor ratio, there was no sufficient evidence to estimate the sample parameter.

**Implications to Counselor Education and Supervision**

First, the MSS could be utilized in clinical supervision and counselor training programs to encourage supervisors to be reflective practitioners who seek out and model self-assessment to improve and enhance multicultural knowledge and skills in providing supervision. The MSS can help supervisors identify their areas of strength and needed areas of development in competent multicultural supervision. It is important to encourage supervisors to assess themselves in their knowledge, attitudes, and skills in multicultural supervision as a part of professional development. Second, the CACREP (2009) required counselor preparation programs to infuse multicultural issues and diversity in their curriculum to promote social justice and advocacy. Counselor educators and clinical supervisors need to understand, reconcile, and practice in a culturally sensitive manner. Third, the MSS can be used as a screening device that can be administered in various settings both trainings and professionals to help institutions evaluate and appraise clinical supervisors and counselor educators performance in multicultural supervision. The MSS can also be used for a gatekeeping purpose to detect inadequacies of supervisors in providing multicultural supervision. Lastly, the MSS can be utilized as a research tool in multicultural supervision to enhance and advance knowledge in the area of clinical supervision and counselor education, especially in the assessment of multicultural supervision. Researchers could use the MSS as a guideline for future assessments in addressing an inclusive definition of multiculturalism and diversity.

**Directions for Future Research**

The initial development and validation of the MSS was an attempt to identify qualitative characteristics, hidden attitudes and unobservable traits through a quantitative assessment. To be a usable inventory, the MSS needs further validations to develop different types of validity and reliability. Replication of these findings and extension to different populations will require further research of the MSS. In this sample there was an over-representation of females who were Caucasian, Christian, and attracted to the opposite gender. Validation on more diverse populations will help strengthen the generalizability of the MSS. In
addition, a social desirability effect seemed to be evident in one component of the MSS. Future research should be done by using the Social Desirability Scale (i.e. Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale) along with the MSS to monitor this phenomenon. The researchers hope that future scholars will continue to develop the MSS as a practical assessment in multicultural supervision to advance the knowledge in the filed of clinical supervision.

Conclusion

On balance, the analysis of the psychometric properties of the MSS was encouraging given the initial evidence suggesting that scores on the measure were valid and reliable. As it is with all new instruments, the refined measure will need to be administered to a second sample to further examine validity-related evidence and to explicate the structure of the concept of multicultural supervision. In addition, the MSS has made a unique contribution to the field of supervision since it is distinguished from existing inventories in multicultural supervision and measures a broader parameter of multicultural issues in supervision.

References


Across the state of Texas, individuals are routinely hired to serve in the capacity of professional school counselors without the proper training or credentials. This Delphi study attempted to generate a consensus among counselor educators and directors of guidance on the associated concerns regarding this hiring practice. Themes were generated from the responses of 21 counselor educators and 5 directors of guidance. The practice was examined using three separate codes of ethics, professional literature, and the responses of non-certified individuals currently serving as professional school counselors.

Professional School Counselors (PSC’s) are a vital part of the educational leadership team serving the academic, career development, and personal/social needs of students (DeVoss & Andrews, 2006). In a single day, a PSC can deal with academic planning, college applications, behavioral disturbances in students, interaction with governmental...
agencies such as Child Protective Services or Juvenile Probation, upset parents, stressed out teachers, and students in crisis. In addition to these issues, the PSC is charged with the development and management of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program intended to meet the developmental needs of all students. PSC’s must also address closing the achievement gap while providing equity for all students (ASCA, 2005; TEA, 2004). Quality student services provided by a PSC are contingent upon receiving the appropriate professional education and training required to meet the diverse needs of today’s students. While Texas Education Code Chapter 33 (TEC § 33.2.F.33.A, 2003) calls for employment of at least one school counselor for every 500 students, there is no legal mandate found in state statute to do so. In addition, there seems to be a shortage of certified elementary and secondary school counselors in Texas (University of North Texas, 2009). For these reasons, districts often seek to hire uncertified individuals as school counselors. The result is that many students in Texas do not have the benefit of a highly trained professional serving in the role of PSC on their campus.

**Background Information**

Counselor educators are routinely contacted by individuals who have already been or have the promise of being employed as a PSC prior to making application or being admitted to a counselor education program. The requests from these individuals include emergency certification, deficiency plans, a degree plan, and/or guaranteed admission into the counseling program. With increasing frequency, classroom teachers without the proper education or required credentials are routinely being asked to take on the responsibilities of a PSC while obtaining on the job training. This practice raises numerous concerns associated with the welfare of students and liability for the school district. Also of concern is the pressure being placed on counselor education programs to train and educate these fledgling counselors; a practice which potentially threatens the entire profession.

Probationary or emergency credentialing is unique to the educational setting. The practice of hiring uneducated/untrained professionals to serve as school counselors suggests school counselors need less sophisticated skills than other counselors (Magnuson, Black, & Norem, 2004). Many administrators do
not understand the unique skill set or role required of school counselors (Dodson, 2009; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005). PSC’s provide a vast array of counseling, guidance, and mental health services on a school campus. In some instances, the PSC may be the only mental health professional with whom a student has contact. This is especially true in small rural districts that only employ one counselor who serves all grades. Anecdotal evidence suggests these small districts are more likely to engage in the practice of hiring an uncertified individual to fill the counseling position. Consequently, students in those districts may not receive the same level of services in the school systems as clients served in other counseling settings. Numerous issues arise in such situations. As the only counselor in the school district, this individual does not have a colleague with whom to consult. Without the proper training, the individual may not even recognize the severity of a situation or the need to consult with another counseling professional. The following is an example of such a situation.

A counselor educator received a phone call from a first semester student who had been employed as a PSC on an emergency permit. The counseling student had been working with a tenth grade male that came to talk to her about anger issues. The student disclosed he was very unhappy about his situation at home and his mother’s live-in boyfriend. He stated he hated the boyfriend and had thought about killing him. The previous evening, the mother had intervened and taken a handgun away from the boy. The boy stated he did not want to get in trouble for killing someone, but he often gets so angry he does not know if he would be able to control himself. The mother did not secure the handgun, and the boy still had access to it. The counseling student discussed with the boy ways in which he could control his anger and sent him back to class. She then contacted the counselor educator to discuss resources for teaching anger management skills. The counselor educator helped the student recognize that the boy was homicidal and needed immediate intervention. She walked the counseling student through the necessary steps of informing the mother and obtaining help for the boy. Because the student had not been fully trained, she did not recognize a dangerous situation and failed to respond in an appropriate manner.

The above mentioned scenario is one of many issues prompting this research. The purpose of this study is to generate an
agreed upon set of concerns of Texas counselor educators and directors of guidance regarding the hiring of non-trained individuals in the role of the PSC. The researchers desired feedback from counselor educators, directors of guidance, and counselor supervisors regarding the hiring of nonqualified/uncertified individuals. The ultimate goal is to raise awareness of the need for a highly qualified PSC so that educational leaders responsible for hiring will better understand the implications and liability involved in allowing a non-trained individual to serve in the PSC role.

**Methodology**

This study used the Delphi method, which has been used to obtain consensual and consistent opinions from experts using a systematic approach to the data-gathering process (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Stone Fish & Busby, 2005). The Delphi method has been described as “a method for structuring group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem” (Linstone & Turoff, p. 3). The Delphi process involves rounds, or phases, whereby information is gathered, feedback is provided, and individuals participating in the process are provided the opportunity to revise their original views (Milson & Dietz, 2009). Through several rounds of dialogue, a common understanding of a problem or situation can be reached. Engaging counselor educators and directors of guidance in this research was essential to the process. These individuals have an expertise in the field of counseling and are able to engage in critical thinking and problem solving related to the profession. For this study, three rounds, or phases, were used; qualitative methods were utilized to analyze the responses in each round of the dialogue.

**Round One**

In order to engage individuals in the dialogue, a call was sent out via the TACES electronic mailing list requesting participation in the study and providing a link to an online survey instrument. Participants were able to participate in the dialogue by answering five open ended questions on the survey. Participants were unable to view the responses of other participants. The survey questions were:

1. What knowledge and skills would you consider to be essential for students to have before being hired in a school counseling capacity?
2. What is your perception of the greatest liability in hiring non-certified or emergency certified counselor?

3. What should the requirement be for on-site supervision of non-certified or emergency certified counselors?

4. If on-site supervisors of non-certified or emergency certified counselors were required to have mentor training, what should be included in the training?

5. Do you perceive a difference in the professional identify development between fully certified and non-certified counselors? If so, what difference do you see?

In the first round of dialogue, 26 individuals responded to the questions including 21 counselor educators and 5 directors of guidance. Of the 26 respondents, 14 agreed to be identified as having participated in the research. The responses to the questions were analyzed using a qualitative coding method in order to identify common themes. Once the themes were identified, the second round of dialogue occurred.

Round Two

The identified themes were e-mailed to the original 26 respondents for verification purposes and to allow for further comments and clarification. Because some of the participants had asked not to be identified, the e-mails were sent using a blind copy in order to obscure the addresses of the other participants. If the participants were in agreement with the themes, the response simply indicated agreement. If the participants felt additional information was needed on the themes, the response provided feedback and clarification. In the second round, 10 further responses were obtained with 7 being from counselor educators and 3 from directors of guidance. Those responses were once again coded utilizing qualitative methodology and incorporated into the initial themes.

Round Three

The newly identified themes were once again e-mailed to all 26 participants for a final review. Qualitative methodology suggests the utilization of member checking in order to ensure the researchers are accurately analyzing and interpreting the information provided by the participants. Participants agreed the themes were an accurate representation of the concerns generated through the discussion.
Emerging Concerns

Results

The initial themes identified after the first round remained fairly constant throughout the additional rounds of dialogue. The additional comments made in the subsequent rounds made minor adjustments to the wording and provided comments further supporting the identified themes. A discussion of the themes from each of the questions will follow.

Question One

The first question sought to identify the essential knowledge and skills, which should be in place before being employed as a PSC. The common themes had a strong emphasis on knowledge, skills, and training. The areas of essential knowledge included child development, individual and group counseling, theories, crisis counseling, legal and ethical requirements related to the counseling profession, and the differences between the role of teacher and counselor. Essential skills included counseling children and adolescents and crisis counseling. The identified areas of training included working with parents.

The majority of the identified essential knowledge and skills could only be obtained through a counselor training program. Research literature provides support for these themes. Akos and Galassi (2004) suggested school counselors should be trained as developmental advocates who promote positive developmental student outcomes. A Delphi study seeking to identify the research agenda for the school counseling profession indicated the highest ranking for the effectiveness of school counseling interventions on student achievement (Dimmitt, Carey, McGannon, & Henningson, 2005).

In addition to support from research literature, the non-trained counselors themselves recognize their lack of competence. In retrospect, these individuals have acknowledged they were not qualified to serve in the role of PSC. The following comments were taken from the discussion board in an online Introduction to Counseling course. The comments were not gathered as a part of the study, but were associated with an assignment. However, they provide evidence of the need for training prior to entering the field. All of these students are in their first semester of coursework and are currently employed as PSC's:

Student 1: When doing the self-assessments, I found it a little shocking at how much I didn’t know. I knew some (which was exciting when I got to one that I did know!). But taking self-assessments is certainly
eye-opening. It made me aware of the things I need to know and hopefully will know when I am through with this program (personal communication, October 4, 2008).

Student 2: Skill development is important before you begin counseling. I have to admit that when you told me that it was dangerous to start counseling before we were trained I was thinking “how hard can it be?” I had a great idea that I would give great advice and fix all teenage problems. After reading the article I see that I was all wrong about a lot of things. I would have never thought about some of the things that a counselor should do as a check and balance in communication with a client (personal communication, October 12, 2008).

Student 3: One thing I thought I could see happening was looking only at the first issue a client brings to you and focusing on that and not realizing the real issue. I guess I just kind of assumed a client would know what they’re needing counseling for. Of course now that I typed that I guess that sounds kind of silly to assume (personal communication, October 11, 2008).

These comments are indications of the lack of understanding regarding the roles and responsibilities of a PSC. This is the first step in the process of increasing awareness so that knowledge and skills can follow. According to Hackney and Cormier (2005), learning to counsel others is a developmental process. Therefore, these individuals may not be at an appropriate developmental stage to work competently and ethically with children in schools as professional counselors.

Question Two

The second question of the survey addressed liability issues. The following themes emerged regarding the liability of unqualified individuals providing counseling services in the school setting: lack of knowledge and understanding of the role of the counselor which can lead to legal and ethical problems, lack of knowledge of counseling ethics, lack of competence in counseling knowledge and skills, and principals may not be able to identify deficits in training. One participant made the comment: “The reality of liability is a lawsuit. The tragedy of liability is children are not protected from harm” (personal communication, October 11, 2008).
EMERGING CONCERNS

The first and most obvious concern regarding the hiring of non-certified personnel is the violation of Texas Administrative Code (TAC). The assignment of public school personnel and the required credentials are outlined in TAC §230.601.f (2003). The code requires that individuals serving in the capacity of school counselor must hold a Texas School Counselor Certificate #31. In the event a school district is unable to employ a fully certified counselor, emergency permits are required. The district must be able to demonstrate what efforts have been made to hire a qualified individual prior to requesting an emergency permit. The requirements for emergency permits are outlined in TAC §230.504.h.1 (2009) and include the completion of 24 graduate hours, 12 of which must be in guidance and counseling. In the event of a lawsuit, a school district would have difficulty defending itself when Texas Administrative Code requirements have not been followed.

As counselor educators, we teach our students that adhering to the professional code of ethics is the strongest defense for liability issues. The Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators is outlined in Texas Administrative Code Rule §247.2, Standard 1.8 which states “the educator shall apply for, accept, offer, or assign a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications” (TAC, 2002). The American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) both have ethical standards regarding professional qualifications and competence. The ACA Code of Ethics Standards C.2.a (ACA, 2005) states “counselors practice only within the boundaries of their competence, based upon their education, training, supervised experience, state and national professional credentials, and appropriate experience.” In addition, the ACA Code of Ethics states counselors should only accept employment for positions for which they are qualified and clients must be informed about credentials and qualifications of the counselor.

The ASCA Code of Ethics (2004) contains the same language as the ACA Code of Ethics. The ASCA Code Standard D.1.f. (2004) also requires members to advocate for administrators only hiring “qualified and competent individuals for professional counseling positions.” The hiring of non-qualified individuals is a clear violation of the codes of ethics of Texas Professional Educators, ACA, and ASCA. It would be difficult to defend the decision-making and actions of the
counselor or the hiring decision of an administrator in the event of litigation. Adhering to the professional code of ethics is a protective factor to the individual; however, the primary intent of the code is to protect the clients served by the profession.

**Question Three**

The third question addressed the requirements for supervision of non-certified individuals. In many situations of a non-qualified individual working as a PSC, supervision is either not available or is provided by an administrator without a counseling background. The response to this question was unanimous. A certified counselor should always be available, preferably on campus, and weekly supervision meetings should be held with a fully certified counselor. Supervision provides for continued professional development and is a check and balance system to ensure the welfare of clients. Allowing school counseling graduates to practice without post-graduate supervision has been reported as a concern in the literature (Magnuson, Black, & Norem, 2004). By contrast, in order to practice as a Licensed Professional Counselor in Texas, one must complete an internship consisting of 3000 hours of post-graduate supervision. This requirement is an indication of the level of professional development necessary in order to engage in independent practice. This is not true for school counselors in Texas. Schools are employing individuals with no training in counseling and then allowing them to work without adequate supervision.

**Question Four**

The fourth question asked what type of training supervisors should have in order to provide supervision to non-certified individuals employed as PSC’s. The first concern that emerged from this topic was the liability issue for the supervisor involved in supervising a non-qualified individual. As a supervisor, the individual assumes a certain amount of liability for the work of the supervisee. This created an ethical dilemma for those answering the question. Is it unethical to supervise someone who is not qualified to practice? A supervised non-qualified individual is better than an unsupervised one. Although it is not the optimal situation, the supervisor is providing an indirect layer of protection for the students by overseeing the professional development of the individual who is providing counseling services.
Other themes that emerged from this question included understanding the role of the school counselor, mentor training, ethics training, crisis training, and training in district policies. In order to provide supervision for Licensed Professional Counselors in Texas, one must have completed a 40 hour supervision training course. It was suggested the same training requirements should apply for the supervision of PSC’s. Competency in counseling does not equate to competency in supervision. Nelson and Johnson (1999) suggested counselors providing supervision without the proper training may be practicing outside of the area of competence resulting in an ethical violation. Supervision is a challenging activity and requires appropriate training and preparation (Magnuson, Black, & Norem 2004; Studer, 2005).

**Question Five**

The final question focused on professional identity. Professional identity involves embracing the theories and philosophies of a chosen profession, identifying oneself as a part of the community of professionals, networking with other professionals, and continued professional development. The development of professional identity is one of the identified student learning outcomes in most counselor training programs. Professional identity impacts the manner in which one engages in his or her job and advocates for the profession and for the clients served. The consensus was that a lack of training impacts professional identity, results in a lack of confidence and self-efficacy, and an inappropriate sense of professional competency. Without appropriate training, administrators shape the identity and understanding of the role of the counselor through assigned duties, many of which may be non-counseling related. There was a concern that the individual may be considered as an assistant principal or an executive assistant to the principal. One respondent stated uncertified school counselors may be seen as “teachers who don’t have a classroom anymore and have traded lesson plans for scheduling” (personal communication, October 6, 2008). The final agreement was professional identity is developed through training and ultimately through performance. The quality of preparation is imperative.

Professional identity development is an on-going process, beginning with graduate studies and extending into practice (Brott, 2006; Leggett, Roaten, & Ybañez, 2009). Brott (2006) stated:
“counselor educators are structuring the professional identify development of counselors-in-training through guided learning experiences with a focus on demonstrated effectiveness” (p. 179). On many school campuses, the actual functions of school counselors do not reflect the identified best practices and role definition continues to be a challenge (Scarborough, 2002). School counselor education programs teach students appropriate roles and responsibilities for PSC’s and how to advocate for effective utilization of their skills in order to facilitate academic achievement for all students. When professional identity is being shaped by someone outside of the profession, it is unlikely the individual will ever fully develop the optimal professional identification.

Additional Analysis

In addition to identifying the themes for each of the questions, the responses were analyzed to compare the concerns from counselor educators and directors of guidance. No distinct differences were found between the two groups. The same qualitative coding methodology was utilized to determine whether or not the same themes emerged in the first round of dialogue. In addition, when the additional rounds were conducted, there were no major disagreements on the identified themes. The directors of guidance indicated a higher level of concern regarding hiring of non-certified individuals than the counselor educators did. One counselor educator had minimal concerns and indicated support for the practice of hiring non-certified individuals. This respondent stated the skills could be learned on the job without compromising quality of services to students. However, this individual also disclosed she had been hired under emergency certification and completed her master’s degree while serving in the role of PSC. This counselor educator did not provide additional input after the first round.

Two of the directors of guidance indicated the university should provide supervision and assume responsibility and liability for the student until the full certification is obtained. This was an interesting finding in that many counselor education programs do not support the hiring of non-certified individuals. It does not seem reasonable for a university to be asked to assume responsibility for a hiring decision made by the school district that is in direct violation of the professional code of ethics and Texas Administrative Code.
Discussion

In a university training program, students are not allowed to work with clients prior to establishing mastery of basic counseling skills. When students begin working with clients, the university provides intensive supervision throughout the training process. Students must demonstrate professional competence of counseling knowledge and skills prior to being endorsed for certification or licensure. Every year, many public schools in Texas are circumventing this process by hiring non-trained individuals to serve in the role of PSC disregarding TAC requirements and professional ethics. We identified numerous concerns regarding the impact on student services and the impact on professional ethics and credibility. Those concerns are supported through an analysis of the literature related to counselor training (Brott, 2006; Scarborough, 2002).

The counselor educator’s role goes beyond simply teaching knowledge and skills. The role also includes assessing the student’s fitness for the profession. In the event a student has personal issues that could potentially impede the ability to work effectively with clients, the counselor educator has an ethical obligation to protect the welfare of all future clients. This protective layer is lost when individuals are employed prior to completion of a training program.

The individuals participating in the study acknowledge the shortage of qualified professional school counselors, especially in rural school districts. However, they also cited issues leading to the hiring of uncertified individuals including inappropriate utilization of school counselors and large student loads. A partnership between educational leadership and counselor education programs would provide training for new administrators on the effective utilization of school counselors, the comprehensive developmental guidance model, and the need for hiring highly qualified school counselors.

Implications for Professional School Counseling

In order to provide the highly qualified counselors that students’ deserve, school districts and universities have a professional imperative to partner together to recruit individuals to the profession and appropriately train them to meet the developmental needs of all students. Counselor educators can assist school districts with retention of PSC’s by providing training on best practices and effective utilization in order to support
academic achievement, career development, and personal/social needs of today's students. A working partnership and proactive initiatives could increase the talent pool of professional school counselors and hopefully eliminate the practice of hiring non-qualified individuals in the role of school counselor.

As previously stated, there is a perceived shortage of school counselors in states such as Texas (UNT, 2009). This shortage is not consistent across the nation. Shortages of school counselors are more prevalent in the Southeast and Southwest, with no shortages reported in the Mid-Atlantic States (Schaerer & Hansing, 1994). Towner-Larsen, Granello and Sears (2000) found more opportunity (e.g. shortage areas) for PSC's willing to serve rural areas. Funding for the education and training of PSC’s is provided only through federal and state grants. All other students must find ways to finance their education; many find that financing in the form of a job as a PSC while attending a counselor education program. In Texas, as with many states, as the population grows more diverse, there is greater need for bilingual school counselors. Training grants for bilingual counselors would offset the costs and provide the opportunity to obtain the advanced education to more individuals. Some school counselors are currently eligible for a loan forgiveness program created by Congress (ACA, 2008). However, this program only applies to counselors working in areas of national need as identified by the United States Department of Education. Expansion of the loan forgiveness programs would be beneficial in increasing the number of individuals able to pursue the additional education required to become a PSC.

Texas schools seem to be violating established statutory (TAC) requirements for education and hiring of PSC’s. At this time, there is no oversight in this area and there seem to be no consequences for this violation. Some schools are changing the title of the individual to Dean of Students, Academic Advisor, Counseling Assistant or something similar; these individuals are performing counseling-related services. As a result of this Delphi study, it seems that legislation needs to be enacted that would require every school to employ a PSC and establish penalties for violation of statutory requirements.

Further research in this area is needed to provide empirical evidence of the need for a highly qualified PSC on every campus. A study of the differences in academic achievement between schools
with a fully certified PSC and schools with non-trained individuals serving in the role would provide an opportunity to examine the impact of a highly qualified counselor on students. This study clearly articulates a set of concerns among counselor educators and directors of guidance regarding the hiring of non-qualified individuals serving in the role of PSC. Students deserve the benefit of a highly qualified school counselor just as they deserve highly qualified teachers as required by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (NCLB, 2002). Addressing this hiring practice is essential in order to allow PSC’s to fully participate as a member of the educational leadership team serving the academic, career development, and personal/social needs of students.

References


As the nation becomes more demographically diverse, it is imperative that school counselors take a leadership role in promoting multicultural advocacy. This major ethical responsibility cannot happen without active interventions on several levels. A review of the literature suggests that interventions should be implemented to address the entry-level competencies of new school counselors, the perception of the school counselor's role, the school's climate, community support, resources, and the potential ramifications of developing leadership skills focused on multicultural advocacy. The authors identify challenges posed with each level of intervention, and offer strategic interventions to assist school counselors in addressing each challenge.

The 20th century has witnessed some remarkable movements in school counseling multicultural advocacy. In 1908, Parsons provided vocational guidance to immigrant youth in Boston, laying the foundation for career counseling as it exists today (Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004). In the 1930s, Sanchez raised awareness of cultural biases in standardized intelligence tests, an issue that is still of concern (Kiselica & Robinson, 1993).
As recently as 1997, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund brought suit against the Texas Education Agency, claiming discrimination against culturally different students through its use of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (Clegg, 2001). Public school policies and systems as a whole are constantly changing to fit the needs of the students that fill them.

Schools are a microcosm of the changing ethnic and racial demographics across the United States (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Education Trust, 2009). Consequently, the school counselor’s leadership skills in the realm of multicultural issues have become increasingly important (Lee, 2007). It is essential that school counselors convey multicultural advocacy as a natural byproduct of who they are as leaders within the profession. Dimmitt, Carey, McGannon and Henningson (2005) surveyed an expert panel including past presidents of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), school counselor educators, co-authors of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005), and practicing school counselors to ascertain the high priority issues requiring research in education. The 21 panel participants named advocacy and diversity issues as two significant areas of need for school counselors’ skill development. Because this article addresses the term in the context of schools, multiculturalism additionally concerns itself with educational achievement gaps within the school systems.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has charged counselors with the task of taking “action to ensure students of culturally diverse backgrounds have access to appropriate services and opportunities which promote the maximum development of the individual” (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2004, p. 3). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) 2009 standards defined advocacy as “action taken on behalf of clients or the counseling profession to support appropriate policies and standards for the profession; promote individual human worth, dignity, and potential; and oppose or work to change policies and procedures, systemic barriers, long-standing traditions, and preconceived notions that stifle human development” (CACREP, 2009, p. 58). In other words, advocacy is a form of social action, which propels counselors to reduce social problems and confront injustice and inequality in the school setting (Erford,
House, & Martin, 2007). Thus, for school counselors to demonstrate leadership in this area, they must assume the role of advocate. To assist school counselors in becoming proficient with this duty, this article provides potential challenges gleaned from the literature, as well as strategies for overcoming them.

**Entry-level Competencies**

As the profession of counseling explores ways to improve the training of school counselors, counselor education programs seeking CACREP accreditation are required to provide training regarding multiculturalism and advocacy. CACREP is the representing body of all academic aspects of the counseling profession established by the American Counseling Association (Capuzzi & Gross, 2001). Though not all university programs seek CACREP accreditation, its standards reflect the profession’s expectation of entry-level counselors.

CACREP (2009) required counselor preparation programs to include issues of social and cultural diversity, including the counselor’s roles in social justice, advocacy, and cultural self-awareness in their curriculum of study. The American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (2005) articulated the expectation of counselor non-discrimination and respect for diversity. ASCA (2004) addressed multiculturalism by noting that multicultural competency was demonstrated by school counselors’ awareness of how their own cultural identity impacted the counseling process. In addition to addressing their own relationships with clients, the Code of Ethics implies advocacy by stating that counselors should not condone discrimination practices by others (ACA, 2005).

Additionally, CACREP (2009) specifically addressed the role of school counselors by requiring foundational knowledge in issues of advocacy, diversity, equity, and barriers that impede student success.

To apply this concept of leadership to multiculturalism within the school environment, school counselors must act “so that all students, regardless of their cultural background and heritage, deserve equal access to a quality education” (Lee, 2001, p. 257). Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) added, “culturally skilled counselors should attend to and work to eliminate biases, prejudices, and discriminatory practice” (p. 483). The ASCA National Standards for Students (ASCA, 2004) specifically called upon school counselors to be actively involved in and committed to eliminating obstacles to
student success. For example, counselors can monitor the achievement of students through the collection and utilization of data, thus assuring that culturally different students are considered when making curricular or policy decisions (Schwallie-Giddis, ter Maat, & Pak, 2003).

Challenges. In spite of the emphasis that professional counseling codes of ethics and credentialing boards place on cultural competence, many novice counselors enter the field without these skills. Holcomb-McCoy (2001) indicated that academic training did not significantly increase multicultural competencies among elementary school counselors. While elementary school counselors reported an increased awareness of their own racial/ethnic cultural heritage as a result of taking a multicultural class, they identified themselves as least competent in racial identity development and multicultural knowledge. These competencies are prerequisites to understanding the worldview of the culturally different student. “Because one is able to articulate his or her own biases and prejudices does not mean one is knowledgeable of other cultures or skilled in cross-cultural counseling” (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001, p. 199). The discrepancy between comfort and competence in relation to cultural self-awareness, multicultural awareness, and knowledge about others can result in counselors inadvertently attempting to provide services beyond their level of expertise, thus limiting effectiveness with multicultural students. The challenge for counselor education programs becomes one of ensuring that the content of multicultural courses thoroughly prepare school counseling trainees to work effectively with diverse student populations (Bemak, 2005; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007).

While there is some evidence that multicultural training is being required and infused in counselor education, the same does not hold true for counselor academic preparation addressing advocacy knowledge and skills. The literature is bereft of suggestions on how school counselors moving into the 21st century can redefine their role to include an emergence as change agents and advocates (Bemak & Chung, 2005). A central concern of contemporary education is that families who are culturally different from the majority of those found in schools are often excluded from decisions involving their own children (Lee, 2007, 2001). Without adequate training for school counselors in advocacy and multicultural leadership skills, they
enter the profession ill equipped to respond to the underlying needs and problems that many culturally different students and their families’ experience.

Strategies. In 1992, Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis developed the Multicultural Counseling Competencies which defined core knowledge and skills that all counselors should possess upon entering the profession of counseling (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The authors outlined the expectation that professional counselors possess awareness of their personal beliefs and attitudes as they enter into the counseling relationship. Additionally, the competencies move beyond counselors’ awareness of their beliefs and attitudes to address the importance of understanding the beliefs and attitudes of those whom they serve. The expectation is that as counselors become more culturally competent, they will utilize the knowledge, beliefs, and skills to serve the student population more effectively.

This prevents cultural encapsulation, which impedes the ability to conceptualize the worldview of the culturally different student (Ramirez, Lepage, Kratochwill, & Duffy, 1998). Counselors’ understanding of the culturally different student’s worldview enables them to select appropriate intervention strategies and techniques.

In order to empower students, counselors need to possess the knowledge and skills to form meaningful alliances with culturally different families. Trusty and Brown (2005) suggested that counselors have an advocacy role to play in helping the school environment acknowledge “that parents-guardians are often the best advocates for their children” and that school counselors “join parents in advocacy for their children” (p. 260). Research studies (Constantine, 2001; Constantine & Sue, 2006; Constantine & Yeh, 2001) indicated that as multicultural competencies were strengthened in counseling students and practicing counselors alike, this set of knowledge and skills becomes further reinforced through educational and professional development opportunities. These findings suggest that school counselors would benefit from stronger coalitions between counselor education programs, school districts, and professional organizations. Also, in 2003, a task force formed by the American Counseling Association developed a set of advocacy competencies to address the role of the professional counselor as advocate. These competencies were endorsed by ACA and stressed the importance of school counselors becoming advocates for the students, schools/community, and
society as a whole (Ratts, DeKruyf, Chen-Hayes, 2007).

**School Counselor Role**

With a plethora of planned strategies, counselors must advocate for their own professional identity (Gysbers & Henderson, 2005; Johnson, 2000). Galassi and Akos (2004) proposed school counselors move from managers and service agents of a school-based comprehensive counseling program to that of advocates for a total community system. This shift promotes the healthy development of all children through all the resources available in the community. In doing so, external assets - the opportunities that the community provides students for healthy development - can be evaluated. Internal assets, which define the interpersonal attitudes, knowledge, and skills students acquire for healthy development, can also be addressed and evaluated. In promoting school and community environments that foster positive development, school counselors become providers of direct services that are part of a comprehensive program as well as facilitators of the indirect services of advocacy, collaboration, and coordination. As such, counselors lead efforts in building “coalitions with professionals and others in the school and community to better serve students” (Galassi & Akos, 2004, p. 156).

**Challenges.** Counselors committed to advocacy must consider the possible negative repercussions that could result from such a course of action. School counselors who advocate systemic change for the benefit of their students must be prepared to face emotional exhaustion, being labeled as troublemakers, losing their jobs, or backlash from angry or intolerant colleagues (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). In addition, some counselors must also contend with ways they inadvertently sabotage their own advocacy efforts. The system as a whole is more powerful than an individual within the system (Keys & Lockhart, 1999; Parsons & Kahn, 2005; Stone & Dahir, 2006). When counselors allow themselves to be victimized by dysfunctional systems and adopt roles that contradict the role of student advocate, they inadvertently become a part of the system that impedes student success (House & Hayes, 2002). This puts counselors at risk for becoming disconnected from their professional identity (Bemak & Chung, 2005). Therefore, when assuming the advocacy role on behalf of students, counselors run the risk of confronting resistant
systems. In such instances, school counselors can create barriers for themselves out of their desire to avoid conflict (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Ratts, Dekruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007).

Moreover, if the school counselor’s professional identity is dependent on maintaining a well-cultivated image as the friendly peacemaker within the schools, taking a stand as an activist for social reform may threaten this persona (Bemak & Chung, 2008). School counselors may promote this image through professional practices that over-emphasize accepted counselor characteristics such as warmth, acceptance, and empathy at the cost of other needed characteristics such as leadership and the ability to confront unfair practice. Consequently, school counselors may not choose to sacrifice their esteem within this system (Dworkin & Dworkin, 1971). To be sure, these qualities are not mutually exclusive. Strong leadership may, in fact, be most successful when counselors are able to communicate warmth, acceptance and empathy while promoting fair practice.

Strategies. In order to help provide educational access and fairness for students, school counselors must re-examine and define their roles to include advocacy leadership (Bemak & Chung, 2008, 2005). Cultivating leadership skills requires counselors to strengthen their own concept of counselor identity. Most school counselors recognize guidance classes and responsive services as integral parts of their job descriptions. However, to develop an identity as an advocate, it is important for school counselors to realize that the skills they need for their role as advocates may be those they already possess. Counselors must be amenable to learning to use those skills in advocating for students whose voices may be silenced. Examples include the application of communication skills for persuasion and the use of collaboration skills when advocating with district and community power structures (Trusty & Brown, 2005).

Eriksen (1999) and Lee (2001, 2007) contended the skills school counselors already possess are applicable to the art of advocacy. Kiselica and Robinson (2001) identified commitment, appreciation for human suffering, communication skills, understanding of systems approaches, individual, group, and organizational change strategies, as well as knowledge and use of the media as counseling skills that lend themselves to effective advocacy. Through responsive services, school counselors promote positive self-identities, self-awareness, validation of cultural heritage,
and positive interpersonal relations. Many of these skills used at an individual or small group level can also be used to create system-wide change for students (Lee, 2001). Trusty and Brown (2005) stated that counselors’ knowledge of school policies and procedures, local and state political and school-governance structures are valuable tools when applied to advocacy work. Constantine (2001) stressed that as counselors experience success in advocacy for diverse populations, their sense of competence will increase and the counselor will be more willing to engage in advocacy activities. Additional strategies suggested by Johnson (2000) included the distribution of printed material, such as brochures and newsletters, that educate stakeholders about the appropriate advocacy role of the school counselor, and perhaps more specifically, by broadcasting activities and accomplishments. School counselors may also utilize available opportunities to act, such as participating in site-based teams, and district-level and community committees to articulate and demonstrate the unique services of the counseling program.

At the same time, it is important for counselors to ultimately recognize that most systems are resistant to change. Counselors choosing to become change agents need to prepare themselves for continuous and sustained effort. In order to prepare themselves for the inevitable frustrations and discouragement that surface when trying to change a system, counselors need to develop self care skills and behavioral coping strategies (Trusty & Brown, 2005). These self-care skills could range from collaborations with colleagues to organizing time commitments so the counselor’s needs are also taken into account. Behavioral coping strategies could involve such practices as meditation, exercise, regular consultation sessions with peers, and other means by which the counselor’s passion can remain nourished and enthusiasm maintained.

School Climate

Lack of training in multiculturalism and advocacy skills represents just one of several barriers school counselors face when they commit to advocacy efforts in their schools. The counselor’s leadership role involves promoting policies that create academic environments conducive to the student’s development: academically, personally and socially (Galassi & Akos, 2004). When school Counselors use these roles effectively, policies are positively impacted.
Challenges. The Education Trust (2009) documented educational achievement gaps between students of color and European American students. Because school and district policies often reflect the majority culture, they often negate the cultural diversity within the community and perpetuate the already existing inequalities within the school. This situation presents adjustment challenges to students who come from culturally different environments. Lieberman (2004) utilized the term leadership density to refer to leadership contributions from various stakeholders on a campus. Each of these staff members contributes unique perspectives based on their expertise. This collective knowledge then becomes the basis for decisions regarding the philosophy and goals of a campus. Such campuses recognize the specialized skills counselors contribute. However, the leadership channels on some campuses are fragmented (Adelman & Taylor, 2002). While each department on the campus is attempting to promote the school’s interests, there is no cohesion or consensus about how to do that. Each department acts independently (Baker & Gerler, 2008; Baker, Robichaud, Dietrich, Wells, & Schreck 2009).

Counselors have the skills to collaborate with the different departments and build a common vision that would benefit all students. However, many schools do not recognize the value of these skills, opting instead to cast counselors in administrative and disciplinarian roles that conflict with the purposes of counseling. This role confusion diffuses the effectiveness of counselors to assume leadership within the campus community and to build collaborations with community representatives and families (Bemak, 2000).

Strategies. School counselors are in a unique position to effect social change by challenging the institutions that have created and maintained the injustices that impact students (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Lee, 2007). As counselors attempt to address these challenges, they often discover that the system needs to adjust to the child, rather than to expect the child to adjust to the system (Lee, 2001; Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007). By taking a proactive stance, counselors are able to assume leadership roles within the system (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Stone & Dahir, 2005). Because of extensive involvement in the school and community, school counselor advocates must work collaboratively with teachers, administrators, and parents to identify barriers that impede student success and to implement strategies to alleviate these barriers (Herr, 2002).
One strategy that facilitates a supportive school environment involves an understanding of systems theory. This understanding can help school counselors recognize dysfunctional systems within schools and in the community and its impact on students. With this knowledge, counselor advocates can work to guide systems towards becoming more responsive to the needs of all students (Trusty & Brown, 2005). Hernandez and Seem (2004) believed that school counselors are the “epicenters of change in schools” because of their unique, specialized training (p. 261). Counselors are critical proponents of creating and fostering policies that promote positive and caring school climates.

Community Support and Resources

Contemporary issues such as poverty, racial injustice, and substance abuse are not isolated to the halls of schools (Galassi & Akos, 2004). Since schools are not the only systems that impact the lives of students and families, school counselors need to reach beyond the school buildings to effect change in community systems (Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007). School counselors are in unique positions to partner with community agencies and school districts to create optimal support and resources for their students.

Challenges. One systemic barrier counselors face in negotiating community systems is inadequate external funding. Counselors are not in a position to advocate for their students if they are embroiled in an effort to fight budget cuts. Counselors must continuously defend their programs (Stone & Dahir, 2006). Competition for available funds within public education can be fierce (Baker & Gerler, 2008). While recognizing that advocacy for the school counseling profession is essential to maintaining gains in salary, student-teacher ratio, and role definition issues, school counselors must remember that students are the priority (Eriksen, 1999).

Children face overwhelming social and cultural issues each day, and since schools have unique access to students, they are asked to combat these social issues and provide increasing services (Bryan, 2003). School Counselors who hope to make a difference must change the model they work from and look outside the school walls to build partnerships and alliances within the community. Unfortunately, many schools continue to operate under the traditional model developed in the 1970s and resist changing to keep up with the mental health needs of the 21st century student (Erford, House,

Strategies. School counselors who reach beyond the limited boundaries of the school itself enhance their roles as leaders by collaborating with community representatives. This collaborative strategy enables them to identify and coordinate available community resources on behalf of their students and families, ensuring equitable access to available services (Bemak, 2005). Schools, families, and communities must work together and recognize the necessity for interconnectedness between all involved entities to provide adequate services for all students. Each campus community presents with its own issues and concerns. By becoming familiar with the local resources, as well as current school policies and legal requirements, counselors are able to speak from a position that is cognizant of the layers of influence that impact students (Trusty & Brown, 2005). From this place of knowledge, they are then able to promote those policies that ensure equity and justice for all students (Galassi & Akos, 2004).

A strategy involved in garnering community support is addressed by Keys and Lockhart (1999). These authors identified the “school counselor who functions as a school-community liaison” (p. 104) as an emerging leadership role. Lee (2007) proposed that counselors deliver the services of the comprehensive school-counseling program outside the school hours and building, and in the predominant language of that community, when possible. Although this may require counselors to rethink their daily schedule and routines, it would allow students and families to access services in an environment that may be perceived as more friendly and welcoming; an environment that is, at times, more responsive to realities that may prevent them from participating in campus-based school counseling program services.

Another strategy proposed by Bemak (2000) supported the concept that students with interpersonal difficulties would best be served by collaborative efforts of the school, community agencies, and police. By creating these collaborations, school counselors would support students and families through coordinated efforts rather than multiple, splintered, and overwhelming interventions. Given the high student-to-counselor ratios found in many of America’s schools, creating collaborations with community agencies and coordinating services provides school counselors with additional resources.
These positively impact personal and familial issues that impede student achievement and development. At the same time, collaborative practice allows school counselors the time to plan and implement other activities with the school and community that promote the healthy development of all students (Galassi & Akos, 2004).

Additionally, another strategy involves teacher collaboration and administrative support to remove system barriers that impede student success and development. As teachers and administrative hierarchies increase their understanding of students’ culturally related issues, they can more appropriately coordinate the linkage between school and community resources. This will assist students and their families in securing necessary services.

A final strategy involves assuming a leadership role by collaborating with community entities such as retired counselors, mentors, teachers, and mental health professionals. This collaboration can augment available school counseling program resources (Fuston & Hargens, 2002). It also benefits school counselors to learn and utilize assertive communication skills to persuade the political decision-makers of the need for resources (Trusty & Brown, 2005).

**Conclusions**

Various professional counseling standards and codes of ethics challenge school counselors to more actively address the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds and ensure equitable access to educational opportunities promoting human potential. Often, counselors who attempt to answer this call to action encounter barriers and resistance (Bemak & Chung, 2008). In addition, counselors sometimes sabotage their own efforts through their own poorly developed professional identity as advocates.

According to the ASCA National Standards for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2005), the primary objective of a school-counseling program is to promote the learning environment and further students’ development in the areas of academic, career, and personal/social. This article highlights strategies by which school counselors can enhance their leadership skills in promoting multicultural advocacy. In summary, counselors must continue to build and maintain strong collaborative relationships between counselor education programs, school districts, community organizations, community leaders and state and national associations. By doing
so, districts are assured that school counselors receive the latest and most effective trainings. It also assures that all students within the schools receive equal and adequate services.

Additionally, counselors must include the role of advocate in their definition of school counseling. By using counseling and leadership skills and attaining knowledge of school policies and procedures, local, state political and school-governance structures can be impacted by their advocacy. It is the responsibility of the school counselor to point out barriers within the school that may bring about frustration to students and hinder the learning environment (Stone & Dahir, 2006).

Lastly, counselors must become active and assume leadership positions, with an understanding that school counselors can effect change. By working to ensure that school systems do not force disempowered students to change to fit the system, but instead advocate that school systems adjust to fit the needs of students, counselors exercise multicultural leadership advocacy skills. Further, by assuming leadership roles, school counselors ensure all students receive quality educational programs and access to quality support programs (Stone & Dahir, 2006).

References


