TPC

THE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR
RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

NATIONAL BOARD FOR CERTIFIED COUNSELORS
Promoting counseling through certification

Digest

Promoting scholarship and academic inquiry within the profession of counseling.

Digest Contents

About The Professional Counselor

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

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

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

About the Digest

The Digest is an abbreviated version of The Professional Counselor journal and is intended for the general public.

Exploring Social Sexual Scripts Related to Oral Sex: A Profile of College Student Perceptions

Abstract

This article presents a profile of college students' degree of agreeing that oral sex is not sex. Over half (62.1%) of a sample of college students (N = 781) at a large southeastern university agreed and response rates across demographic groups are presented. Sexual script theory serves as the theoretical framework. Implications and limitations are explored.

Kylie P. Dotson-Blake
David Knox
Marty E. Zusman

Young adults and college students report engaging in oral sex at rates likely startling to counselors and sex educators. In a national survey of 10,208 young people age 15-19, more than half of male (55%) and female (54%) respondents reported engaging in oral sex (Mosher, Chandra, & Jones, 2005). Richters, de Visser, Rissel, & Smith (2006) found that almost a third (32%) of respondents reported oral sex as part of their last sexual encounter, revealing that many young people and college students are having oral sex.

College students' perceptions and behaviors are shaped, in part, by peer perceptions (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999).

Sexual Script Theory further situates perceptions of sexual interactions within the social context explaining that social cultural messages shape sexuality (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001). Consequently, what is perceived to be "real" sex is shaped by one's society. Thus, understanding sexual scripts impacting the college age population is critically important for counselors working with these clients.

Although this understanding is important, little is known about how young people perceive oral sex and what meaning they attribute to it. In an effort to better understand college student perceptions and the social sexual scripts impacting these perceptions, this

study sets forth a profile of undergraduates who agree with the assertion "oral sex is not sex." This profile is intended to help counselors identify young adults potentially more likely to engage in oral sex. Hopefully by more fully understanding the characteristics of college students agreeing that oral sex is not sex, counselors will be able to plan and implement counseling services and educational

with college students in developmentally-appropriate ways, counselors must first understand what these students believe to be true about oral sex. This study is intended to aid in that understanding.

Study data were taken from a sample of 783 undergraduates at a southeastern university (76.4% females and 25.4% males, respectively). Respondents self-

Over half (62%) of the sample agreed with the statement, "If you have oral sex, you are still a virgin." In comparing the characteristics of those who agreed and disagreed, a number of statistically significant relationships emerged. A profile of undergraduates agreeing that oral sex is not sex included being an underclassman, European American, and self-identifying as

What is perceived to be "real" sex is shaped by one's society.

strategies likely to reach this population. It is critically important that counselors seek to understand how college students perceive the act of oral sex because recent research suggests that young people perceive oral sex as safe, with few potential health risks (Halpern-Felsher, Cornell, Kropp & Tschann, 2005). However, engaging in oral sex may expose individuals to the risk of viral and bacterial infections, including chlamydia, gonorrhea and herpes (Edwards & Carne, 1998a, 1998b). In order to be best prepared to share information

identified as 79.5% European American, 15.7% Blacks (African-American, African Black, or Caribbean Black), 1.9% Biracial, 1.7% Asian, and 1.3% Hispanic. Within the sample, 95% identified as heterosexual, 2.9% identified as bisexual and 2% identified as homosexual. The mean age of the sample was 19 years-old. Pearson product moment correlations and non-parametric statistics, including cross-classification and Chi Squares were calculated to assess relationships among demographic characteristics and selected domains.

religious. Recognizing undergraduates who are more likely to agree with the assertion that oral sex is not sex will enable counselors and sex educators to provide targeted, specific education experiences to this population. However, although certain statistical differences existed among participants who believed that oral sex is not sex, over 60% of the total participant group in this study agreed that oral sex is not sex. Consequently, the findings of this study support the need for broad education about the risks and realities of oral sex for all college students.

Social Support and Career Thoughts in College Athletes and Non-Athletes

Abstract

Social support and career thoughts were examined in 118 college student-athletes and 154 non-athletes from a large public university in the southeastern United States. Social support was found to have a significant relationship with career thoughts. In addition, several significant differences were found between the study's subpopulations.

Stefanie Rodriguez

The relationship between social support and career thoughts was examined in college student-athletes and non-athletes. Data was collected from 118 NCAA Division I student-athletes and 154 non-student-athletes from a large public university in the southeastern

...social support was found to have a significant relationship with career thoughts.

United States. The five types of social support measured are as follows: acceptance-belonging is the degree to which the individual's needs for affiliation and esteem are met through the provision of love, acceptance, respect, belonging, and shared communication; appraisal-coping assistance is the degree to which the social environment provides the individual with emotional support, hope, and coping assistance through assurances that feeling are normal, positive reinterpretations of the situation and future, and information on coping skills during times of stress; behavior-cognitive guidance is the degree to which the social environment meets the individual's needs for direct and modeled feedback about appropriate behaviors and thoughts; tangible assistance-material aid is the degree to which instrumental needs for money, goods, and services are met by the social environment; and modeling is the information on how others feel, handle situations, and think. Although in the total sample no significant unique relationships were found between the five types of social support and career thoughts, overall social support was

found to have a significant relationship with career thoughts.

In addition, several significant differences were found when comparing populations (i.e., athletic status, gender, and academic class status) in the relationship between social support and career thoughts. No significant differences between males and females were identified, however the relationships between appraisal-coping assistance and commitment anxiety, and modeling and commitment anxiety were found to be significantly stronger in the non-athlete population. This means that these two types of social support may be more effective at reducing commitment anxiety in the non-athlete population than in the student-athlete population.

Lastly, the relationships between overall social support and commitment anxiety, appraisal-coping assistance and commitment anxiety, and behavioral-cognitive guidance and commitment anxiety were found to be significantly stronger in the upperclassmen populations, meaning that overall social support and these two types of social support may be more effective at reducing commitment anxiety in the upperclassmen population that in the underclassmen population. Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that certain types of social support may in fact be more helpful to individuals in certain populations at reducing negative career thinking.

The Ethical Frontier: Ethical Considerations for Frontier Counselors

Abstract

This paper explores the aspects of counseling significant to rural and frontier settings. It discusses the traditional attitudes of rural and frontier populations, the counselor's place in these communities, and ethical concerns that are significant to these areas of counseling. It also offers potential ways to address related ethical issues.

Keith A. Cates
Christopher Gunderson
Michael A. Keim

Working in small, rural and frontier communities can present counselors with challenges and experiences not often encountered in larger population centers. The geographic constraints of the area itself, the culture and behavior of the client population, and the attitudes and skills of the counselor can combine to create significant difficulties in providing ethically competent mental health care.

Counselors frequently face serious ethical dilemmas as service delivery in rural and frontier communities presents them with ethical challenges distinctive to those environments. The needs and considerations of rural and frontier communities often place professional codes and guidelines in opposition to prevailing small community standards and expectations. To address these concerns, rural and frontier clinicians may find it necessary to adopt a view of professional boundaries and ethical guidelines that places more importance on community values and professional roles in the community than on rules of behavior as defined by professional organizations. This necessity on the part of counselors is intensified by the fact that mental health training, and much of the ethics literature and professional ethics codes, appear to favor urban-based mental health practices. This could potentially lead to erroneous assumptions when it comes to distinguishing between ethical and unethical practices in small community environments.

It is important to understand that while there may be significant differences between the ethical considerations of urban, rural and frontier mental health

practices, this does not mean that ethical codes have no applicability in rural and frontier clinical settings; to the contrary, potential ethical concerns should be closely monitored precisely because of the inherent ethical dangers that come with working as a counselor in such areas. The scarcity of both human and material resources in frontier areas can cause many standard professional practices to take on significant ethical aspects. In particular, confidentiality, boundaries of competence and multiple relationships are prevalent and recurring concerns that can be difficult to ethically uphold in professional practice while providing the highest quality of service to the most clients in remote areas.To address these professional concerns counselors are encouraged to define clear boundaries with their clients, paying particular attention to the issues of confidentiality that are common in such environments. They also should develop professional and cultural awareness to encompass and understand the needs of frontier communities, particularly those of professional supervision and awareness of cultural values. With due consideration, awareness of these concerns can enable the frontier counselor to ethically integrate these issues into professional practice.

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Sources by Which Students Perceive Professional Counselors' Effectiveness

A B S T R A C T

Using qualitative research methods interviews were conducted with college students regarding the sources they used in generating perceptions of professional counselors. Respondents believed that word of mouth, media sources, and personal experiences were responsible for their understandings of professional counselors. The findings have applications for leaders in professional counseling organizations.

Michael W. Firmin
Richard A. Wantz
Ruth L. Firmin
Courtney B. Johnson

Research has indicated that professional counselors lack public awareness, recognition, and acceptance compared to other mental health human services providers. Various approaches have been used to identify consumers' perceptions of professional counselors. Textbook content analysis, surveys, and interviews are frequently cited in the literature for acquiring this information. Using qualitative research methods, we conducted a semi-structured in-depth interview method with 26 college students in a general psychology class regarding the sources they used in generating their perceptions of professional counselors. The participants were randomly sampled in order to maximize external validity. Responses were coded and transcripts analyzed for common themes among the participants. All participants were interviewed twice—with transcription and coding occurring between the interviews.

Respondents mostly believed that common knowledge was responsible for their understandings of professional counselors. Common knowledge included word of mouth contact, misinformation from media, and personal experiences. Word of mouth contact

those of close friends, more so than media or other sources in their concept formations.

We believe that the findings of this study have applications both on macro levels for leaders in professional counseling organizations and also on micro

professional counseling organizations is to advance the profession—and our data suggests that much more needs to be done to create a positive image for the counseling profession. The authors believe that professional counseling advocacy activities should include contact with

However, no matter how insignificant the interaction, respondents preferred personal encounters or those of close friends, more so than media or other sources in their concept formations.

was operationalized as information shared by friends and family members. Media sources also were identified to be cogent in respondents' concept formations. Respondents particularly mentioned the contribution of radio, newspapers, television, and movies. However, no matter how insignificant the interaction, respondents preferred personal encounters or

levels for professional counselors generating positive perceptions of their services for the public as well as for university students. Specifically, we interpret our results as a clarion call to the American Counseling Association (ACA), the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC). The role of

producers, directors, writers, and other influential individuals in Hollywood as scripts are generated. The same advocacy can occur with school newspapers, web sites, circulars, and other sources of "common knowledge." The local media should be utilized to portray positive messages about what professional counselors are and benefits of service utilization.

Chaotic Environments and Adult Children of Alcoholics

A B S T R A C T

The primary goal of this paper is two-fold: to challenge the belief that adult children of alcoholics tend to abuse alcohol as the result of genetic composition, and to show instead evidence that the unpredictable home environment in which alcoholics grow up may be responsible.

All humans are born with a genetic predisposition to addictions of any kind. It takes an environment to trigger the addiction.

James M. Benshoff
Melinda M. Gibbons

This paper identifies the common ground between adult children of alcoholics (ACoAs) and other adult children including those growing up in homes where there is divorce, domestic violence, emotional deprivation, serious financial problems, and other substance-related abuse. The point of this paper is based on the notion that the common ground among such adult children is their growing up in a chaotic environment where they were not able to develop a healthy attachment to their caregivers because their caregivers were unpredictable in their care. While some researchers turn to biology and physiology (nature) to explain the etiology of addiction, this paper highlights the influence of the environment (nurture) in developing and maintaining adult addictions. This paper argues against the genetic composition to explain alcohol dependence. All

humans are born with a genetic predisposition to addictions of any kind. It takes an environment to trigger the addiction. Twin studies on alcohol addiction have only looked at the absence of alcohol in the adopted homes where twins of genetic alcoholics grew up and became alcoholics. These studies have failed to do an autopsy of the home environment where the twins lived with their adopted parents.

An alcohol-addicted environment is not the only environment that may trigger alcohol addiction. As suggested in this paper, a chaotic, unpredictable environment is fertile ground for alcohol and any other addiction-related behavior. It is the compulsive behavior, which eventually trains the brain to respond to a certain stimulus. The goal of any addiction, as demonstrated in this paper is to ultimately relieve feelings of anxiety, sadness, and loss.

Addiction is not a substance-seeking behavior; it is a mood-altering behavior. The high obtained from the substance is not so much through the substance per se, as it is by giving the brain what it wants—a relief to the early feelings of abandonment when ACoAs and other adult children could not count on their caregivers.

A Review of the Literature on Promoting Cultural Competence and Social Justice Agency Among Students and Counselor Trainees: Piecing the Evidence Together to Advance Pedagogy and Research

Abstract

There is a call for research on how to effectively foster cultural competence and a social justice advocacy orientation among counselor trainees. A multi-disciplinary review of the literature reveals a body of anecdotal and empirical evidence in support of the use of pedagogical strategies grounded in critical theory to this end.

Amie A. Manis

This article represents a multi-disciplinary review of the literature on the promotion of multicultural and advocacy competence among students and counselor trainees. The groundwork for exploring the anecdotal and empirical evidence supporting the use and need for research on critical pedagogical strategies is laid with a brief discussion of professional mandates with respect to cultural and advocacy competence. This is followed by a brief overview of critical theory.

This paper consists of a review of the existing empirical evidence pointing to the merits of researching critical pedagogical strategies in counselor education. Foci of the review include the concept of fostering critical thinking and awareness of social positions and power among trainees, scaffolding trainees' examination of the dynamics of privilege and oppression, the role of reflection in training and the role of counselor educators and supervisors in socializing trainees.

This is followed by a discussion emphasizing strategies that may be employed by counselor educators in terms of teaching, supervision and research. The commitment and challenges associated with this highly engaged practice of pedagogy also are briefly discussed. The conclusion calls for integrating critical pedagogical practices into counselor training while also moving forward with research designed to test the effectiveness of these practices.

This paper consists of a review of the existing empirical evidence pointing to the merits of researching critical pedagogical strategies in counselor education.

Addiction Counseling Licensure Issues for Licensed Professional Counselors

Abstract

This article addresses the obstacles of effectively integrating addiction counseling into a nationwide definition of professional counseling scope of practice. The article covers an overview of issues, specific licensure and credentialing frameworks in two U.S. states, and recommendations to effectively bridge the gap between professional and addiction counseling.

Keith Morgen
Geri Miller
LoriAnn S. Stretch

The counseling specialty system has been criticized by arguing that a counseling specialty only defines a practice area. The addiction area is one such area of specialization and the only one focused on a specific DSM-IV-TR disorder class that comes with a separate licensure/credentialing process. The professionalization of addiction counseling strengthened the field and provided a higher-quality of care for those struggling with addiction. However, the authors argue that the licensure/certification process inherent within that professionalization reinforced the notion that addiction falls outside the scope of practice for professional counselors. The authors believe that there is a critical need to recalibrate the licensure/certification process as it pertains to professional counselors and addiction work. Furthermore, the authors believe that the imbedded message in the current licensure/credentialing process (due to the separate addiction counseling licensure/certification track) is that licensed professional counselors cannot and/or should not do addiction work.

For instance, the authors underscore that the original high standards (e.g. upwards of 3,000 hours of clinical

graduate degree (master's or doctorate) these mandates seem excessive and possibly even redundant.

Two remedies for the licensure/credentialing problems are presented. One possible solution is to develop a tiered system of addiction counseling credentials at a national level that takes into account professional experience as well as educational training. The other possible solution covers the standardization of training that addresses the theoretical and practical skills required of an addiction counselor nationwide.

work/supervision) now require recalibration that takes into account professionals desiring to work in the addiction profession with graduate counselor training (as opposed to a high school diploma or GED which was historically, for the longest time, the predominant educational background for those working in the addiction profession). Currently, professional counselors entering the addiction counseling profession with a graduate counseling degree may be required to complete additional training requirements dating back to a prior era.

However, under today's standards for a counseling

The authors believe that there is a critical need to recalibrate the licensure/certification process as it pertains to professional counselors and addiction work.

College-student Personal-Growth and Attributions of Cause

Abstract

Little is known about levels of personal growth attributed by students to typical experiences of college life. This paper documents 2 studies of student self-reported growth and compares growth levels across populations. Both studies measure student attributions of cause to academic and non-academic experiences, respectively.

W. P. Anderson Jr.
Sandra I. Lopez-Baez

Although previous studies have reported high levels of personal growth attributed by survivors in retrospect to coping with traumatic experiences, researchers know little about levels of personal growth attributed to other kinds of experiences. This paper documents 2 studies of student growth attributed to typical experiences of college life and compares levels reported by students to levels reported in previous studies of trauma survivors. The 2 current studies extend the results of 2 previous studies of similar samples.

Our measure of personal growth was the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI). The PTGI was developed to elicit self-

reports, in retrospect, of personal growth (positive psychological changes defined by the PTGI items) attributed by trauma survivors to years of coping after a traumatic experience. We adapted the PTGI for our purposes by rewording the instructions like the developers did in their study of a non-trauma comparison group (their Study 3, 1996). We add a blank table to elicit student estimates of percentage contributions of total growth attributed to specific experiences (attributions of cause) that occurred during the time period of interest.

The two current studies are based on measures of total growth and attributions of cause associated with students' cumulative college careers. Study 1 (N = 122) was comparative and

much of total growth is attributed by a sample of graduating seniors (N = 108) to each of their 4 college years. We interpret the results as evidence of substantial growth each year and of attributions of cause to both academic and non-academic experiences, respectively.

The results of the two current studies are consistent with those of our previous studies, namely, that college students like those in our samples attribute substantial growth to college life and to both academic and non-academic experiences, respectively. (The later result suggests that growth can be facilitated by academic

...college students like those in our samples attribute substantial growth to college life and to both academic and non-academic experiences, respectively.

its primary purpose was to examine the internal validity of our PTGI scores and the construct validity of one of the PTGI subscales. We interpret the results as evidence of both.

Study 2 was descriptive and the primary purpose was to measure how

activities.) We think the method we use can be adapted by other researchers in future studies based on a wide variety of research purposes including the evaluation programs designed to facilitate growth.

Class Meeting Schedules in Relation to Students' Grades and Evaluations of Teaching

A B S T R A C T

A six- year retrospective study of a university career course evaluated the effect of four different class schedule formats on students' earned grades, expected grades, and evaluations of teaching. Some formats exhibited significant differences in earned and expected grades, but significant differences were not observed in student evaluations of teaching.

Robert C. Reardon
Stephen J. Leierer
Donghyuck Lee

A study of a standardized career course at a large southeastern university evaluated the effect of four different class schedule formats on students' earned grades, expected grades, and evaluations of teaching. We hypothesized that course schedule formats (weekly meeting frequency and term length) makes a difference in student learning and evaluation of teaching.

We examined 57 course sections meeting over a six-year period team-taught by lead instructors and coinstructors with an instructor/student ratio of about 1:8. During the time of this study, four class schedule formats were used. In the case of a 16-week semester, the class met once per week for 3 hours; twice per week for 1.5 hours; or three times weekly for 1 hour. A fourth schedule option was for a 6-week term with the class meeting four times weekly for about 8 hours per week. All sections of the course followed a prescribed curriculum comprising a mixture of lectures, panel presentations, small and large group instructional activities, personal research, and field work.

Although grade point average has limitations as a measure of academic achievement, class grades are, nevertheless, a widely accepted method of quantifying students' level of educational achievement. For this study, we assumed that students' final earned grades (EG) would accurately reflect

their learning in the course.

The expected grade (XG) reflects the student's assessment of course demands and optimism about successfully meeting those demands. We felt this grade variable was important as a measure of students' confidence in their mastery of the career development subject matter taught in the course, and therefore,

a valid measure of the relative effectiveness of different class schedule formats.

Student evaluation of teaching effectiveness (SET) is standard practice at most postsecondary institutions. SET appears to be a pragmatic way to access and compare student perceptions of teachers' effectiveness and, therefore, a potential measure of the relative

efficacy of different class schedules.

Examination of the relationship between the three course outcome measures (EG, XG, SET) in relation to the four formats yielded significant differences. Some class schedule formats exhibited significant differences in earned and expected grades compared with others, but significant differences were not observed in student evaluations of teaching. The significant differences found between schedule formats in the outcomes of EG and XG serve to remind instructors, those who supervise them and those managing career courses about the potential impact of this variable.

Some formats exhibited significant differences in earned and expected grades.

Wellness in Mental Health Agencies
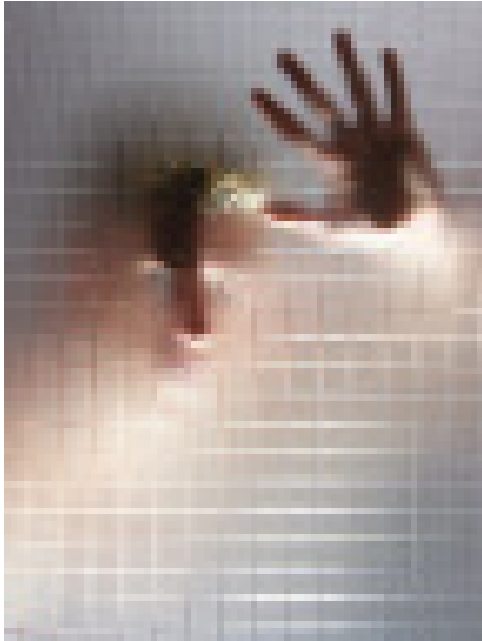
Abstract

Burnout and impairment among professional counselors are serious concerns. Additionally, counselors' work environments may influence their levels of wellness and burnout. This phenomenological study included the perspectives of 10 professional counselors who responded to questions about how their work environments influence their sense of wellness. Five themes emerged: (a) agency resources, (b) time management, (c) occupational hazards, (d) agency culture, and (e) individual differences. Implications for professional counselors and future research are discussed.

Jonathan H. Ohrt
Laura K. Cunningham

Burnout and impairment among professional counselors are serious concerns. Additionally, counselors' work environments may influence their levels of burnout and wellness. The purpose of this exploratory study was to gain a greater understanding of how counselors experience wellness and how their work environment influences their sense of wellness. We used a qualitative, phenomenological approach because we were seeking to understand the participants' lived experience of the phenomena (Creswell, 2007). The research team consisted of two counselor educators; who at the time of the study were doctoral students at a university in the Southeastern United States. The first author is a Caucasian male and the second author is a Caucasian female.

Following the phenomenological tradition, we sought to uncover the central underlying meaning of their experience by reducing data, analyzing specific statements, searching for all possible meanings, and creating meaning units (Creswell, 2009). Thus, we developed two research questions. The first question was, "How do you relate to the concept of wellness as a professional counselor?", and the second question was, "How do you perceive your agency influences your sense of wellness?" The first open-ended question was designed to gain information on each of the counselor's thoughts about wellness and how they interpret the concept. The second question was designed to obtain information about how they believe their work environment affects their sense of wellness. This study included the perspectives of 10 professional counselors from various mental health agencies who responded to the questions about how their work environments influence their sense of wellness. Four themes emerged: (a) resources, (b) occupational hazards, (c) agency culture, and (d) individual differences.

The findings in this study provide some initial information about the various aspects of wellness that may be influenced by professional counselors' work environment. Although agencies may not be able to immediately change all aspects of the work environment (e.g., salary, caseloads, work hours), other aspects such as agency culture and adequate supervision are easier to address. Counselors and clinical directors may benefit from evaluating their current wellness practices through staff questionnaires, focus groups, or needs' assessments. Attending to professional counselors' wellness needs may help to improve the morale in the agency, help counselors avoid burnout, and ensure more quality care for clients.

Attending to professional counselors' wellness needs may help to improve the morale in the agency, help counselors avoid burnout, and ensure more quality care for clients.