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journal promoting
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counseling



THE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

Volume 4, Issue 4

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

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

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Opportunities for Action: Traditionally Marginalized Populations and the Economic Crisis



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This study investigated the career and work life challenges faced by traditionally marginalized populations (e.g., women; historically oppressed racial/ethnic groups; people who identify as lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and/or queer; immigrants; individuals with mental or physical disabilities; older individuals; and those of lower socioeconomic status) in the United States during the troubled and lagging economy that began with the economic crisis in 2008. Further, this study was designed to explore action steps that could be used to address these challenges. The results of this study suggested that although marginalized populations face many significant challenges, there are actions that career development professionals can take in the near future to address these challenges. Implications for practice, training, theory, research, social justice and advocacy are provided.

Keywords: career development, marginalized populations, social justice, economic crisis, socioeconomic status

The current economic climate has taken a significant toll on millions of individuals in the United States. This economic climate was precipitated by the collapse of the housing market (Rothstein, 2012) and has significantly impacted the work experience and employment status of many individuals in the United States (Jacobe, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006, 2009, 2013). Although a broad range of populations have experienced such career development problems associated with this economic context, the economic circumstances have impacted traditionally marginalized populations more dramatically than others (Rothstein, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006, 2009, 2013). For the purposes of this study, the term *traditionally marginalized populations* was defined broadly to include many historically oppressed groups including women; certain racial/ethnic groups; people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ); immigrants; individuals with mental or physical disabilities; older individuals; and those of lower socioeconomic status prior to the onset of the current economic climate (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007; Savage, Harley, & Nowak, 2005; Vera & Speight, 2003).

While there is ample knowledge about marginalized populations regarding their overall career- and work-related challenges (e.g., Adams, Cahill, & Ackerlind, 2005; Badgett, Lau, Sears, & Ho, 2007; Blustein, 2006; Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002; Coombs & King, 2005; Gottfredson, 2005; Hackett & Betz, 1981; Lapour & Heppner, 2009; Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006; West-Olatunji et al., 2010), a gap exists in the literature concerning the particular challenges they face in the context of the current economic climate. This gap in knowledge leaves

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career counselors and counselor educators without an empirical foundation for addressing the particular career development needs of such populations in this troubled economic climate, making it difficult for counselors to respond to calls and implement concrete social justice interventions and actions (Hansen, 2003; Metz & Guichard, 2009; Pope, 2003). Such knowledge would make it possible for career counselors and counselor educators to take evidence-based action to address these problems and allow the field of career counseling to continue in its tradition of social action in solidarity with marginalized populations (Hartung & Blustein, 2002; Stebleton & Eggerth, 2012). As such, the purpose of this study was to investigate the career- and work-related challenges that traditionally marginalized populations face in the context of the current economic climate. Secondly, and more importantly, this study investigated actions that career counselors and counselor educators might take to address these challenges.

A unique challenge of investigating a fluid, dynamic context such as the current economic climate is the need to apply a research methodology that accounts for its time-sensitive, shifting nature. Given this context, the authors used the Delphi methodology (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Skulmoski, Hartman, & Krahn, 2007; Vázquez-Ramos, Leahy, & Hernández, 2007). This approach to research was designed to integrate expert opinion about complex issues at the forefront of a field with experts' forecasts about what might occur regarding such issues in the future. While there is no published research about the topic of this study, the authors connected with experts who have knowledge of this issue. Specifically, the authors asked experts to describe the experiences of traditionally marginalized populations in the context of the current economic climate and to provide suggestions for ways to address these challenges. Although there would be great value in directly asking members of marginalized populations about their career development, it would take an enormous amount of time to investigate the career development challenges faced by such a diverse range of individuals within the current economic climate. This poses a problem in that, by the time such a research agenda was completed, the economic climate might have already made a significant turn for the better, thus making such studies outdated in terms of their immediate applicability. The authors certainly recognize the worth and cultural relevance of interviewing marginalized individuals themselves about their lived experiences, but they also recognize the need to collect and analyze data in a way that allows for timely implementation of the results. Therefore, the authors chose the Delphi methodology in order to collect empirical evidence in a manner that will provide concrete suggestions for action before the economic climate has shifted beyond the scope of such evidence. Before addressing the current economic crisis, however, it is important to discuss first what is known about the career- and work-related challenges that traditionally marginalized populations generally face.

Career and Work Challenges of Traditionally Marginalized Populations

Although the United States provides vast opportunities for success in career and work pursuits, these opportunities are not and have not been equally accessible to all people (Blustein, 2006; Blustein, McWhirter, & Perry, 2005; Burns, 2009; Fouad, 2006; Metz & Guichard, 2009). Further, even when those who have been afforded less societal and cultural privilege are able to access such opportunities, their success and achievements may not be recognized in an equitable manner (Badgett et al., 2007; Coombs & King, 2005; Fouad et al., 2008; Juntunen et al., 2001). The following are examples that represent inequalities faced by traditionally marginalized populations throughout their career development process.

On a systemic level, social norms and structures shape traditionally marginalized individuals' experiences of career and work in ways that disadvantage them in future career pursuits (Adams et al., 2005; Gottfredson, 2005; Lapor & Heppner, 2009; Martín-Baró, 1994; West-Olatunji et al., 2010). During childhood and adolescence, marginalized populations experience a lack of support and resources for pursuing higher education (Adams et al., 2005; Blustein, 2006; Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010) and are less likely to finish high school (Greene & Winters, 2005), which is problematic given the relationship between educational attainment and

the likelihood of future employment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006, 2009, 2013). Members of such populations who go on to higher education in pursuit of their career goals face further difficulties and barriers (e.g., sexism, racism, financial constraints, conflicts between their own cultures and the dominant culture; Fouad et al., 2008; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Juntunen et al., 2001). During the job search, marginalized populations experience discrimination in terms of equal opportunity for employment (Stuart, 2006; Yakushko, Watson, & Thompson, 2008); and once employed, they face ongoing discrimination and barriers to success in the workplace (Badgett et al., 2007; Coombs & King, 2005; Werth, Borges, McNally, Maguire, & Britton, 2008). Such career-related difficulties have been explained through social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), which posits that contextual affordances (e.g., social networks and income) and personal inputs (e.g., gender and race/ethnicity) have a significant impact on individuals' career development and choice process (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). For example, being female (personal input) may affect one's ability to be considered qualified for traditionally masculine careers; and having a lower socioeconomic status (contextual affordance) may result in one lacking a professional network that provides adequate career networking options. While these examples and theoretical postulations do not capture the entirety of the career development marginalization that traditionally marginalized populations experience, they do illustrate the realities that such populations face in American society. These oppressive circumstances also are apparent within and exacerbated by the current economic crisis.

Traditionally Marginalized Populations and the Current Economic Climate

In December 2007, the United States experienced a significant economic contraction. Due to risky subprime mortgage loan practices, many banks had to be saved from bankruptcy; they utilized public and private funds, including a federal bailout under the Bush administration. Between 2007 and 2009, the gross domestic product fell over 5% and millions of individuals lost their homes and jobs. The United States economy continues to languish as a result of this economic crash (Rothstein, 2012). Among the many systemic implications of these events, the unemployment rate increased nationally from 4.4% to 10% between 2007 and 2009. While there is a gap in the literature regarding the ways that this crisis has affected traditionally marginalized populations' career- and work-related experiences, national unemployment statistics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006, 2009, 2013) provide partial illustration of such inequalities. For each ensuing population category, the unemployment rates will be depicted parenthetically as follows: (2006 annual rate, 2009 annual rate, March 2013 rate), in order to show the rates before the crisis began, the rates after the crisis began and the current rates in a compatible fashion. The overall unemployment rate (4.6%, 9.3%, 7.6%) masks stark contrasts in the rates for those who identified as White (4.0%, 8.5%, 6.7%), African American (8.9%, 14.8%, 13.3%) and Hispanic/Latino (5.2%, 12.1%, 9.2%), and those who reported having a disability (no data for 2006, 14.5%, 7.4%). The rates also are quite different among those who did not complete high school (6.8%, 14.6%, 11.1%), those with a high school diploma (4.3%, 9.7%, 7.6%), those who completed some college (3.6%, 8.0%, 6.4%) and those who completed a bachelor's degree (2.0%, 4.6%, 3.8%). Finally, single mothers' unemployment rate (7.1%, 11.5%, 10.7%) is much higher than that of women who report cohabiting with a spouse (3.1%, 6.3%, 4.7%). While one may assume that similar differentials might exist for LGBTQ individuals, immigrants and those of lower socioeconomic status, the United States Department of Labor does not report data in a manner that would allow such comparisons. Further, research has suggested that, in combination, such factors of identity and context as those listed above create further disparities in the unemployment rate (Ewing, Levernier, & Malik, 2005).

These patterns highlight significant concerns. There seems to be consistent disparity in unemployment rates across marginalized groups throughout the economic crisis, as evidenced by the statistics reported by the Department of Labor. Given that unemployment has a negative psychological impact on individuals (Blustein, Medvide, & Wan, 2011; Paul & Moser, 2009), this disparity in unemployment suggests the possibility that marginalized groups experience higher rates of mental health consequences. For example, Paul and Moser

(2009) conducted a meta-analysis to determine what is known about the connection between employment status and mental health status. Their work revealed a significant connection between unemployment and poor mental health.

Although these data illustrate employment and work-related concerns of marginalized populations, the data fall short of providing knowledge that would offer particular direction to career counselors and counselor educators in service of improving the career development of traditionally marginalized populations. This gap in knowledge leaves professionals without empirical foundation for addressing the particular career development needs of these populations in this economic climate, making it difficult for counselors to respond to calls for concrete social justice interventions and actions (Hansen, 2003; Metz & Guichard, 2009; Pope, 2003).

Career Development Interventions for Traditionally Marginalized Populations

The National Career Development Association (NCDA, 2009b) has mandated that career counselors be competent in addressing the unique cultural and contextual challenges that their clients face. Furthermore, one of the founders of the career development and counseling professions, Frank Parsons, focused squarely on empowering poor and marginalized individuals (Hartung & Blustein, 2002), many of whom were recent immigrants (Stebbleton & Eggerth, 2012), to find stable and meaningful work. Parsons desired to work with such populations given his belief that “wealth and power were unequally distributed throughout society” (Hartung & Blustein, 2002, p. 44). Many authors have proposed that culturally and contextually relevant career development practices be used with traditionally marginalized populations (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Hansen, 2003; Pope, 2003; Trainor, Lindstrom, Simon-Burroughs, Martin, & Sorrells, 2008; West-Olatunji et al., 2010). For example, Blustein et al. (2010) suggested that “career development education programs include specific attention to issues pertaining to race, culture, and ethnicity” (p. 253). While such suggestions likely have merit and relevance within the current economic crisis, they have not specifically addressed the career- and work-related challenges of traditionally marginalized populations in this economic climate. As such, the purpose of the present study was to investigate ways in which the troubled economic environment in the United States has affected traditionally marginalized populations in the service of identifying action steps that career counselors and counselor educators might take to address such issues.

Methods

The present study followed the original guidelines for Delphi research (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Skulmoski et al., 2007; Vázquez-Ramos et al., 2007), as well as the Delphi model offered by Fish and Busby (1996). This model includes recruiting experts in the target domain area and asking open-ended questions regarding their scope of expertise. In later stages of the Delphi process, participants rank the importance of each idea that the pool of experts have generated collectively. We, the authors, recruited individuals with expertise about the career development experience of marginalized populations and asked these experts to take part in the Delphi process.

There is no definite technique for choosing experts within the Delphi method (Fish & Busby, 1996; Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Skulmoski et al., 2007; Vázquez-Ramos et al., 2007). Due to the need to account for both theoretical and applied aspects of this complex topic, the authors sought to recruit both scholars and practitioners who are experts on the career development of traditionally marginalized populations (Fish & Busby, 1996). Once the study received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this study, the first step in the recruitment process involved identifying and contacting individuals who are considered experts in this area.

Expertise in this area was evidenced by 20 or more refereed publications about the career development of marginalized populations, as well as a clearly demonstrated commitment to improving the lived experiences of such populations (i.e., scholarship that is intended to improve community/client career development and work contexts). For example, one of the experts targeted for this study conducted studies about marginalized K–12 students' career development, the process and results of which have direct benefits for this population. The authors chose a minimum of 20 publications for inclusion of participants in order to set a high bar for the experts, while also allowing for the inclusion of relatively new scholars in the career development field. Initial criteria were set very high because the next step in the recruitment process involved asking these experts to nominate other scholars and practitioners who also are experts in the target area. The authors used this nomination process based on the notion that such experts would be qualified to nominate other experts in their field (Fish & Busby, 1996; Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Skulmoski et al., 2007; Vázquez-Ramos et al., 2007). The authors identified four individuals who met the two inclusion criteria, and two of them agreed to participate in the nomination and data collection process. These two experts had a significant number of refereed publications (35; 54) that addressed the career development of traditionally marginalized populations. These experts consequently nominated 22 individuals, and 12 of those individuals who were identified agreed to participate in and completed this study.

Because the Delphi method relies heavily on expert opinion, the authors collected detailed descriptions of the experts' backgrounds (the experts themselves provided the ensuing terminology for gender, race/ethnicity and professional identity). Experts had a mean of 23.17 and a median of 24 years of experience in the field of career development, with a range of 4–45 years. Experts' racial/ethnic identification included two as African American, one as Hispanic, one as White/Polish American and eight as White/Caucasian. Ten identified as female/woman and two as male. Seven experts identified themselves as scholars, and five identified as practitioners. These experts' research and/or service provision was focused on a broad range of populations and backgrounds including diversity in race, ethnicity, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, educational background, age and ability status. In terms of geographic regions, one individual worked in the South, two worked in the West, two worked in the Midwest, and seven worked in the Northeast. Two experts worked primarily in a suburban context, two worked in a rural/suburban context and eight worked in an urban context.

Data Collection and Analysis

As outlined by Fish & Busby's (1996) use of the Delphi method, this study involved three rounds of data collection and analysis.

Round one. The first round of this study was designed to capture qualitative data that reflected expert opinions. This data was collected electronically via an online survey platform. In order to create a refined data collection process, an initial survey was piloted with three individuals (a counselor educator with expertise in the career development of marginalized populations, a counselor education doctoral student who worked extensively with first-generation college students, and a counseling psychologist with expertise in the Delphi method and qualitative research). These questions were as follows:

1. What are the most significant career development and work issues experienced by traditionally marginalized populations as a result of the current economic climate?
2. What can career counselors and the career development profession do to effectively address these challenges?

The authors considered the data collected via this pilot survey and interviewed the three individuals about their experience taking the survey. Based on the feedback and responses from the pilot study, question 1 above was split into two questions, as the original question did not yield a clear differentiation between general career

development concerns and career development issues related to the current economic climate. The following three items were generated based on this pilot testing process:

1. In your own work, what are the most significant career development and work issues experienced by traditionally marginalized populations?
2. Please discuss the issues you described in the previous question as they relate to the current economic climate.
3. Please provide suggestions about how career counselors and the career development profession could effectively respond to the issues you have just described.

Given this new question format, question 1 provided a control to prevent confounding data collection, but also allowed the investigation of expert opinion about this topic.

The data collected from these three qualitative questions were analyzed using qualitative description (QD). Sandelowski (2000, 2010) described QD as a research design that stays close to the data. Researchers cannot really divorce themselves from interpretation in the analysis process; however, in QD, researchers seek low inference interpretations and use content analysis to develop thick descriptions of participants' experiences and perspectives. In other words, researchers analyze the data with the intent to giving voice to the research participants, as opposed to interpreting the data through the researchers' vantage point. As opposed to other qualitative methods such as Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the purpose of QD is not to analyze data with the goal of creating theoretical models. Rather, the goal of QD is to simply describe qualitative data in a way that is concise, rich and thorough. The authors specifically chose the QD method since their goal was to describe participants' viewpoints rather than making theoretical inferences about their viewpoints. The authors also attempted to increase the trustworthiness of the analysis by arriving at a consensus about the results of the analysis at each stage as described below.

Three researchers (the first, second, and third authors) used QD to analyze data collected by round 1 participants, all of whom possessed both privileged and marginalized identities. Of these three researchers, two were female, one was male; one identified as heterosexual, two identified as lesbian; two were first-generation college students and one was formerly homeless. Each researcher read the raw data and created codes for each discrete idea that occurred within participants' responses to the questions. These three researchers then met as a team to discuss and reach a consensus about how to delineate complete ideas and what codes should be associated with each of the ideas.

The end result was a list of codes that described each discrete idea that the respondents presented. These codes were then consolidated with other similar codes, which resulted in a list of categories. The categories represented a more complete description of the similar ideas presented across participants. Finally, these categories were organized into larger themes that better arranged the data for the purpose of review and description. No idea or category was given more or less weight in this process. Rather, the goal was to capture and describe all ideas that the participants presented with as minimal repetition of content as possible.

Round two. The results from the qualitative analysis of question 3 ("Please provide suggestions about how career counselors and the career development profession could effectively respond to the issues you have just described") were used to create a survey. The creation of such a survey is consistent with the Delphi method (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Skulmoski et al., 2007; Vázquez-Ramos et al., 2007) and is intended to provide an avenue for experts to rate the relative importance of the issues they have put forward as a group. Questions 1 and 2 were not used to create a ranked survey because question 1 was used as a control question, and

results from neither question 1 nor 2 would benefit from ranking (e.g., it is not beneficial to rank the relative importance of gender or racial discrimination). Consequently, the resulting quantitative survey consisted of 18 action items, which emerged from responses to question 3. These items represented action steps that the experts proposed as means of addressing the career development challenges that traditionally marginalized populations face in the context of the current economic crisis. Experts were asked to rate each item on a scale of 1 (long-term) to 5 (immediate). *Long-term* referred to items that should be addressed within 10 years and *immediate* referred to items that should be addressed within 1 year. These data were analyzed by calculating the mean and the interquartile range (IQR; i.e., variance) for each item, which were then used in the third and final round of data collection.

Round three. The resulting analysis from round two was used to create a personalized survey for each of the expert respondents. Each expert received a form that gave the group mean and IQR for each action step item on the survey. This final step prompted the experts to reconsider their original answers in light of the average and variability of their expert peers' responses. This stage of the Delphi method is intended to move experts towards consensus, while avoiding group pressures that might occur in a face-to-face format. The results of this round were once again analyzed to determine the mean and IQR.

Results

This study yielded two types of results. First, unranked qualitative categories and themes emerged based on expert opinions about the most pressing career development issues that traditionally marginalized populations face as a result of the current economic crisis. Second, ranked qualitative categories and themes were developed based on experts' suggestions for action steps to alleviate those career development issues.

Questions 1 & 2 – Career Development Challenges

Based on the authors' qualitative analysis of questions 1 and 2, the responses to both questions fell into one of five themes: Systemic—General, Systemic—Population-Specific, Systemic Impact on the Individual, Individual—General or Individual—Population-Specific. The one exception to this pattern is that no data from question 2 fell into the Individual—Population-Specific theme. These themes and associated categories are detailed in the Appendix. The Systemic—General theme was characterized by career development issues that are embedded in systemic structures and dynamics. The Systemic—Population-Specific theme included categories that were systemic in nature, but referred to a particular population or group. The Systemic Impact on the Individual theme represented categories that detailed the effects that systemic dynamics have on individuals. The Individual—General theme contained categories that described career development challenges that individuals from all marginalized populations face. The Individual—Population-Specific theme was characterized by career development challenges that particular groups or populations face. While we could give significant time and space to analyzing these themes, the purpose of this study is primarily to inform possible action steps. As such, these results are provided in summary form (see Appendix) as context for the action steps that the experts suggested. Specifically, the reader may use them to evaluate the viewpoints, mind frames and knowledge sets of the participants who recommended these actions.

Question 3 – Action Steps

The authors' qualitative analysis of question 3 yielded four action step themes: Practice, Training, Theory & Research and Advocacy. There were a total of 18 categories across all of these themes, which we transformed into items to create a survey for experts. As detailed in the Methods section, this survey was sent out over two rounds of data collection to determine experts' collective rating of these items and to attempt to create a consensus among these experts. In addition to the ranked items, experts also ranked the relative importance

of the four themes (Practice, Training, Theory & Research and Advocacy) that emerged from the authors' qualitative analysis of question 3. The resulting list, ranked by importance in terms of time-to-action on a scale of 1 (long-term, considered less urgent) to 5 (immediate, considered more urgent), is presented in Table 1. This table also includes averages and variations of participants' responses from both rounds of data collection. Beyond the relative importance that experts placed on these items, some interesting patterns should be noted about the final rankings. Six of the top 11 items were Practice items, which is consistent with the top ranking of the Practice category overall (see Table 2). Training-related actions were ranked first and second on the list, which suggests the high importance of training future career counselors about the plight of traditionally marginalized populations in the context of the current economic climate. While not prevalent at the top of the list, the highest ranked Advocacy item suggested that the career development profession take an inward look at its history in service of informing future actions. As one expert stated, "I often think that paying attention to the roots of the career counseling profession in terms of the social reform movements of the last century would help the current field find its passion and mission for advocacy." Theory & Research items also were not prevalent at the top of the list. Interestingly, though, the highest ranked item of this category was not about a particular theory, but rather was a suggestion to expand all theories to include traditionally marginalized populations' lived experiences. Finally, the lowest ranked item on the list had a mean of 3.45. Given the scale (1 [long-term] to 5 [immediate]), experts believed that all 18 of the items should be addressed at some point by the career counselors and counselor educators.

Table 1*Ranked Action Steps*

Action Items	Theme	Round 2			Round 3		Final Rank
		<i>M</i>	IQR	Rank	<i>M</i>	IQR	
Increase knowledge, awareness and counseling skills in regard to contextual and cultural factors' influence on the career development of traditionally marginalized populations.	Training	4.82	0	1	4.91	0	1
Career counseling and programming should be culturally and contextually relevant to various traditionally marginalized populations (e.g., involving networking, mentor development, career knowledge and experiential learning) and should be developed in partnership with these populations when possible.	Practice	4.73	0	2	4.73	0	2^a
Increase knowledge of economic systems and their effect on clients' career development.	Training	4.73	0	2	4.73	0	2^a
On college/university campuses, provide career services to marginalized students and alumni by collaborating with student and alumni organizations.	Practice	4.64	1	4	4.64	1	4
Expand the vision of theory and research in the field of career development to include those who have been typically left out of the career development narrative.	Theory & Research	4.36	1	5	4.55	1	5^a

Advocate for the career development field to reengage with its roots in social justice through practice, training, research and theory.	Advocacy	4.36	1	5	4.55	1	5^a
Career counseling and programming should be focused on increasing self-efficacy, resilience, and client strengths, and building skill sets to overcome systemic barriers (e.g. racism, sexism, educational access).	Practice	4.18	2	10	4.45	1	7
New and effective interventions should be developed in order to increase critical consciousness and skill development among marginalized clients.	Theory & Research	4.27	1	7	4.36	1	8
Increase clients' knowledge of, and reframe beliefs about, various career paths and fields.	Practice	4.27	2	7	4.27	2	9^a
Career development professionals from marginalized groups should be represented in career services organizations.	Practice	4.27	2	7	4.27	1	9^a
Become knowledgeable about resources used to address systemic barriers (e.g., financial assistance, legal rights), as well as developing multilingual methods for communicating these resources to clients (e.g. having Spanish language materials for ESL clients).	Practice	4.18	2	10	4.18	1	11
Advocate for increased access to, and support for, educational opportunities for traditionally marginalized populations.	Advocacy	4.00	2	12	4.09	2	12
Advocate for legislation and public funding that addresses unfair structures and practices related to the career development of traditionally marginalized populations, and do so collaboratively with such populations when possible.	Advocacy	3.91	2	13	4.00	2	13
Advocate in general at the national and community level for the importance of work in the lives of all people.	Advocacy	3.73	3	14	3.82	3	14
Increase knowledge of legal regulations and protections that apply to traditionally marginalized populations.	Training	3.64	1	16	3.73	1	15^a
Develop new delivery models in order to make up for a shortage of career development professionals.	Theory & Research	3.73	1	14	3.73	1	15^a
Advocate that employers increase awareness (e.g. the value of marginalized workers), implement training (e.g. challenging occupational stereotypes and implicit biases), and develop policies that increase access and equity for traditionally marginalized populations.	Advocacy	3.45	2	17	3.55	2	17
Reestablish and create more programs for career counselors throughout the country; further, these programs should be designed to train future professionals to meet the unique needs of traditionally marginalized populations, particularly in relation to the local contexts of the clients being served by program graduates.	Training	3.36	3	18	3.45	3	18

^aItem has an equivalent mean score with another item, and therefore is held equivalent in the final ranking.

Table 2*General Theme Ranking*

Themes	Round 2			Round 3		
	<i>M</i>	IQR	Rank	<i>M</i>	IQR	Final Rank
Practice	4.82	0	1	4.82	0	1
Training	4.64	1	2	4.64	1	2
Advocacy	4.00	2	3	4.00	2	3
Theory & Research	3.64	2	4	3.64	2	4

Discussion

The first discussion point surrounds the experts' view on the career development challenges that traditionally marginalized populations face, both in general and in the context of the economic crisis. Experts expressed the opinion that the career development challenges that traditionally marginalized populations face occur at both individual and systemic levels. Furthermore, they suggested that there are issues relevant across all marginalized populations, as well as issues unique to particular populations. When considering these findings in tandem with the experts' broad range of research/practical experience working with diverse populations, one may assume that the action steps the experts proposed are based on wide-reaching and comprehensive understandings of the career development of marginalized populations. Furthermore, these findings align with professional understandings of career-related cultural competence (NCDA, 2009a, 2009b) and the systemic nature of social justice and social inequity issues (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2002).

In order to provide context for interpreting experts' suggestions for action, it may be helpful to reflect on how they viewed the nature of the current economic crisis in terms of the career development of traditionally marginalized populations. All of the participants believed that the current economy has exacerbated the challenges that this population faced before the crisis began. One expert reflected as follows:

The current economic crisis has made each of these issues [that were present before the crisis] more pronounced. Resources within education systems are stretched thinner. Support programs are triaged. Teachers are dealing with larger class sizes and fewer possibilities for connected interactions with students. Parents are stressed and anxious; many work longer hours and thus are home supervising less and have little time to advocate for their children's educational needs. Others face the health and mental health consequences of unemployment and are less able to support their children emotionally and intellectually, as well as financially.

In addition, some experts believed that the economic crisis also has resulted in unique challenges for marginalized populations that were not necessarily present before the crisis began. For example, one expert stated the following:

The realities of constrained budgets are juxtaposed with efforts to use the current situation to carry out anti-immigrant agendas in the name of preserving quality and, more outrageous, "preserving unity" (I refer to Arizona's efforts to ban Chicano and Latino studies because they are "separatist" and "foment hate").

Another expert suggested the following: “There is increased discrimination against all marginalized populations, especially those individuals of color and older workers ... Scarcity of [employment] opportunity breeds hatred, blame, resentment, distrust.”

Given the apparent credibility of these experts’ opinions, as well as their acknowledgement of general and unique features of this economic climate, the authors now turn to their opinions about action steps. Upon reviewing this list, it seems that many of these items would be relevant both before and after the economic crisis, while others may have a unique purpose within the crisis. For example, the top ranked item (“increase knowledge, awareness and counseling skills in regard to contextual and cultural factors’ influence on the career development of traditionally marginalized populations”) might be considered best practice based on common training standards (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2009; NCDA, 2009a, 2009b) at any time; while one of the items tied for second (“increase knowledge of economic systems and their effect on clients’ career development”) might be considered a suggestion specific to the current economic crisis. As one expert asserted, “Career professionals need to be trained in macroeconomics and global business so they understand trends and can adequately train/inform their clients throughout the course of their career development.” This call for an understanding of economics is certainly not new in the career development literature (Blustein, 2006), but is not present in training standards for counselors (CACREP, 2009) or career counselors (NCDA, 2009a, 2009b).

In terms of the ranking of the general categories, it is of interest that Theory & Research was ranked lowest of the general categories. While this is speculation, the experts in this study may have believed that current theory could be expanded to include the plight of marginalized populations (the highest ranked item in this category indicated as much), and that efforts would be more appropriately focused on using current theory to better train career counselors and serve clients. For example, Social Cognitive Career Theory certainly is “flexible” enough to address this topic through the concepts of contextual affordances and personal inputs (Lent et al., 2000), and a large body of existing research does just that. So it seems that experts are more focused on putting research and theory into practice than on developing new theories and findings.

Suggestions for Action

The remaining question is how this list can best be used to take action. In a general sense, this question might be better framed in terms of professional and organizational strategic planning. Given the purview of one’s career counseling practice or educational influence, how might this list aid in strategically choosing actions that can support the career development of traditionally marginalized populations? For example, career counseling centers in higher education settings might consider the Practice and Training items the most relevant and accessible items from this list. Private practice counselors working in geographic areas where English is not the most common language might act on the item suggesting that it is important to have multilingual methods for communicating these resources to clients (e.g., having Spanish language materials for English as a Second Language clients). Specifically, one expert suggested that those in private practice should “develop a library of Spanish language resources, websites, etc. relevant to educational and vocational development, options, etc.” Board members of organizations such as the NCDA might view this entire list as a model for strategically addressing the needs of traditionally marginalized populations by deploying its resources and networks to correspond with the ranking of the four thematic categories (Practice, Training, Theory & Research and Advocacy).

While this list can be used to generate actions unique to organizations and practice areas, it may also be helpful to return to some specific suggestions that experts made within these 18 categories. For example, in

regard to the top ranked item (“increase knowledge, awareness and counseling skills in regard to the influence of contextual and cultural factors on the career development of traditionally marginalized populations”), one expert suggested the following:

More education and professional development for career counselors and practitioners is also useful, especially dissemination of research and practice implications related to the specific populations. For example, many counselors or others in the field know little about the career or work issues of transgender people (especially in the context of more competition for fewer jobs, as well as increased competition once hired), and would be better able to serve and advocate for them if they themselves were more informed.

In regard to one of the items tied for second place (“career counseling and programming should be culturally and contextually relevant to various traditionally marginalized populations [e.g., involving networking, mentor development, career knowledge and experiential learning] and should be developed in partnership with these populations when possible”), one expert said the following:

At the community level, counselors may be involved in public education—in facilitating communities in identifying needs and accessing resources that may be used by the whole community, including but not limited to facilitating a forum for the voices of communities to reach policy makers as well as influence services, programs and grants.

In relation to the Training item addressing the legal rights of marginalized groups (“increase knowledge of legal regulations and protections that apply to traditionally marginalized populations”), one participant focused on training for both counselors and employers:

Career counselors need to be well educated about the regulations governing people in these groups and the kinds of protections the laws offer. Employers definitely need to be better educated about the laws as well as provided with examples of how international or disabled candidates are valued employees.

This quote also refers to another action item calling for advocacy in relation to educating employers about the value of marginalized populations.

In any case, this list should be interpreted in light of how any one individual or organization is able to address the population(s) being served. Each professional and organization has a unique array of opportunities, social networks, skill sets and constraints. Given that all items on this list were ranked to reflect relatively high importance, there is no “wrong” item from this list on which to act. Rather, by working together across contexts and organizations, it may be possible for counselors to enact all of these items by using their unique resources and talents.

Limitations of This Study

This study has several limitations. First, by asking career development experts instead of directly asking marginalized populations, this study is skewed toward expert-based models of understanding and their collective assumptions. This may exclude important nuances for particular populations. Second, the majority of the experts identified as White and female, which may bias the results of this study due to factors of personal identity. Finally, the majority of the experts worked and focused their research primarily in urban contexts,

and most of them worked in the Northeast. This factor may bias the results in terms of geographic region and context due to unique family or social norms.

Areas for Future Research

Areas for future research can be found in the Theory & Research action items suggested in this study. First, experts recommended “expand[ing] the vision of theory and research in the field of career development to include those who have been typically left out of the career development narrative.” This suggestion is an echo of previous authors’ assertions that career development theories are biased toward more privileged populations (Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2003). Models such as Blustein’s (2006) or Byars-Winston and Fouad’s (2006) might be considered efforts on this front, and researching such models is one possible method of acting on this suggestion. These models call for career counselors to place in the fore issues of context and culture, rather than considering culture an afterthought to traditional career counseling methods.

Second, experts suggested that “new and effective interventions should be developed in order to increase critical consciousness and skill development among marginalized clients.” Increasing critical consciousness is a particular suggestion that invokes the need to raise clients’ awareness of their sociopolitical position in society (Freire, 1970; Martín-Baró, 1991, 1994), and therefore is a call to develop interventions which attend to clients’ lived experiences of marginalization and discrimination. Research methods such as participatory action research (PAR; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Kidd & Kral, 2005) may be particularly well-suited for such efforts, given this method’s combination of intervention and action in collaboration with clients. PAR is different from traditional research in that research participants take part in developing research questions, collecting data, analyzing data and using the results to make substantive changes in their context. For example, in a community where African American unemployment is very high (Levine, 2012), career counselors or researchers could pursue such individuals in a practice of investigation that engages them in the research process. Such a study might begin by facilitating a discussion around a question such as, “What questions should we be asking to figure out how to improve your chances for employability in this community?” A researcher might form concrete research questions to shape the study, but community members would drive the focus. All those involved would then collect data, analyze it and see what could be done with the answers to effect change.

Finally, experts suggested that “new delivery models will need to be developed in order to make up for a shortage of career development professionals.” This is a very pragmatic suggestion that may be necessary to fulfill the needs of clients in both this and any future economic crises. As such, researchers, scholars and professional counseling organizations should consider methods for collaboration in service of meeting this call. Although there has been recent collaboration in the counseling profession on this front (Hansen, 2000), there remains much work to be done. In addition to collecting experts’ suggestions, further research should be carried out that captures the voices and experiences of traditionally marginalized populations. Although asking experts about such topics provided an efficient and systematic method of inquiry within a fluid and changing context, future researchers should collect data directly from these populations.

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Appendix

Career Development Challenges Faced by Marginalized Populations

Theme: Systemic—General

Generalized challenges

- Systematic discrimination and stereotyping occur in terms of issues such as (but not limited to) education, training, hiring, promotion and compensation, some of which are more pronounced in certain career fields and/or geographic areas.
- Marginalized populations experience lack of, and barriers to, support and access for completing educational goals, obtaining quality healthcare and achieving career goals.
- Economic challenges, including meeting one's basic needs, are exacerbated by systemic discrimination and the growing gap between *haves* and *have-nots*.

Challenges specific to the economic crisis

- Traditionally marginalized populations tend to be employed in situations with poor job security, pay and benefits; be at higher risk for layoffs; and have insufficient supports to deal effectively with losing work.
- Amplified discriminatory hiring, promotion and compensation practices may occur due to scarce resources and increased competitiveness in the job market.
- Public funding and policy do not effectively address the career development problems that traditionally marginalized populations are facing in this current economic climate.
- Overall, the economic crisis has further limited access to education and employment for traditionally marginalized populations, increased the gap between the *haves* and *have-nots*, and increased the number of people experiencing economic hardship.

Theme: Systemic—Population-Specific

Generalized challenges

- Women face sexism and workplace patriarchy in regard to pay, promotion, family decisions, relational approaches to working and challenges related to other intersecting identities (e.g., race, sexual orientation).
- LGBTQ populations experience geographic discrimination, consider when to “come out” and navigate hostile work environments.
- Latina/o adolescents and young adults experience educational inequity, barriers to accessing higher education (particularly for undocumented individuals) and fewer career development opportunities in general.
- Immigrant refugees face language proficiency challenges, lack of professional networks and inadequate career development support.
- Low-income, first-generation college students lack access to financial resources, professional networks, mentors and an understanding of available career development resources; additionally, these students may receive poor financial aid counseling and subsequently enter into unnecessary debt.
- International students often face foreign cultural norms, pressure from family and potential employers' insufficient knowledge about their employability.
- Individuals with disabilities, particularly hidden disabilities such as mental illness, may encounter problems related to discrimination, disclosing their conditions and articulating strengths.
- Individuals from a low-socioeconomic status background may face significant challenges including a lack of housing, childcare, financial security and adequate educational preparation.
- College students of nontraditional ages face discrimination, particularly when there are gaps in employment or significant career field changes involved.

Challenges specific to the economic crisis

- Immigrants face increased difficulties in finding work, particularly in places where immigrant employment legislation has been reenforced or newly created during the economic crisis.
- Due to increased competitiveness, there is increased discrimination for people of color, older workers, those with nontraditional sexual identities, and those with disabilities.

- Unemployment rates in the current crisis are significantly higher for African Americans and Latinos in comparison to Whites.

Theme: Systemic Impact on the Individual

Generalized challenges

- Facing significant career development barriers may lead to despair and lowered expectations for the future.
- Conflicts between an individual's culture of origin and work culture may lead to internal conflicts, including feelings of *selling out*.
- Being marginalized results in negative thinking, which becomes embedded in one's self-concept and decision-making processes.

Challenges specific to the economic crisis

- Scarcity of opportunity fosters negative mindsets and beliefs among and about these populations (e.g., hatred, blame, resentment, distrust) and makes the process of finding work more difficult.

Theme: Individual—General

Generalized challenges

- Lowered self-esteem, self-efficacy and outcome expectations in traditionally marginalized populations can create significant problems for career development.
- These populations tend to have reduced knowledge and perception of possible career/occupational pathways.

Challenges specific to the economic crisis

- Marginalized populations are more afraid to change jobs or transition their careers in this economic climate.
- Feelings of disempowerment and loss of identity in an increasingly impersonal climate, as well as a lack of creativity in conceptualizing possible career options, have a negative effect on individuals' ability to pursue, secure and maintain work.

Theme: Individual—Population-Specific

Generalized challenges

- Individuals with disabilities may have lower self-efficacy, be overly dependent on others, have unrealistic expectations and be wary of disclosing disability despite possible benefits.
- Immigrant refugees may have different notions of time and professionalism, lack important skill sets, maintain career goals that are incompatible with the U.S. job market and be more likely to take lengthy trips back to their home country that interfere with job success.
- Individuals over 30 may lack adequate understanding of technological career development resources.

Challenges specific to the economic crisis

- N/A

Animating Research with Counseling Values: A Training Model to Address the Research-to- Practice Gap



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The persistent research-to-practice gap poses a problem for counselor education. The gap may be caused by conflicts between the humanistic values that guide much of counseling and the values that guide research training. In this article, the authors address historical concerns regarding research training for students and the conducting of research by faculty, and report on an effective research education model animated with values that guide clinical, supervisory and pedagogical identities within counselor education.

Keywords: research-to-practice gap, research training, counselor education, research education, master’s-doctoral collaborative research group

Research is a fundamental part of counseling and counselor education (Huber & Savage, 2009). The structure of the scientist-practitioner model embraced by counseling and other social science fields endeavors to create a useful dialogue between research producers and research consumers that leads to effective evidence-based practice (Lambie & Vaccaro, 2011). Unfortunately, there is evidence to suggest that this dialogue is not actually occurring (Murray, 2009). The breakdown in productive dialogue has roots both in the types of research being produced and in practitioners’ ability to utilize published research (Bangert & Baumberger, 2005; Murray, 2009). This disconnect has resulted in rising concern about the utility and efficacy of research conducted within counselor education for those in practice. Termed the *research-to-practice gap*, it is a conspicuous problem for the field of counseling at a time when demand for a research-informed evidence base to guide clinical practice is increasing (Moran, 2011).

Furthermore, research in counseling seems disconnected from the essential values that have guided the field (Sperry, 2009). This may be due to a fundamental divide between the values that shape counseling and those that shape research. Mariage, Paxton-Buursma, and Bouck (2004) have suggested that using values as a lens to approach research and practice will serve to “animate” (p. 534) these processes in new ways. Animating both the content and the process of research with counseling values may produce results that are more meaningful to both counselor educators and counseling practitioners. Ideally, the result will be coherent and systemic research designed to solve today’s complex problems.

The research-to-practice gap is acknowledged as a problem throughout the helping professions (Vanderlinde & van Braak, 2010). In counselor education, the gap appears to be amplified by the tenuous nature of the

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relationship that both practitioners and academics have with research. For practitioners, research is often seen as irrelevant to day-to-day practice and incapable of addressing the complexities of real-world work (Murray, 2009). This perspective is reflected in the conclusion of a methodological review of research articles published in the *Journal of Counseling & Development (JCD)* between 1990 and 2001, which states that “many ACA [American Counseling Association] members will most likely find it difficult to comprehend and evaluate the usefulness of much of the research published by *JCD*” (Bangert & Baumberger, 2005, p. 486). Murray (2009) has concluded that most practitioners view research and practice as two entirely unrelated arenas.

For counselor educators, the relationship with research also appears tenuous. Faculty members are charged with two primary tasks relating to research: (1) training practitioners who are capable of utilizing research, and (2) contributing to the counseling knowledge base through publishing original research. The effectiveness and productivity of counselor educators with both of these tasks is in question. A recent study highlighted that faculty do not appear to consistently demonstrate productive engagement with their own research. From 2004–2009, almost 50% (47.9%) of faculty in programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) published two or fewer articles in refereed journals, and almost 20% (18.5%) published none (Lambie, Ascher, Sivo, & Hays, 2014). The relationship that both counseling practitioners and counselor educators have with research appears to be unproductive. Given the current climate of increasing need for mental health care and dwindling resources, the research-to-practice gap must be addressed. A critical examination of the way research is woven into both the professional identity of counselor educators and counselors as well as the counselor-training environment is warranted.

Research and Academia

Research in counselor education is often conducted within academia where, historically, the dominant discourse values positivistic ways of knowing and prioritizes measurable academic products (McLeod & Machin, 1998; Moran, 2011). Central to this discourse is the perspective that value-neutral researchers can acquire knowledge through reducing complex human experiences to isolated variables that are discrete and measurable. Additionally, the last several decades have seen an intentional shift in academia away from emphasizing quality teaching and research toward basing tenure and promotion on the quantity of refereed articles published (Lambie et al., 2014). This shift is undergirded by administrators’ view that measurable academic products are necessary to enhance the field’s reputation, and as a result, the “publish or perish” mentality has become commonplace (McGrail, Rickard, & Jones, 2006). Working within this framework appears to position many counselor educators’ research selves in direct conflict with the values that have historically supported counseling, supervisory and pedagogical orientations.

Research and Counselor Educator Identity

The field of counseling has historically been a practitioner-oriented field focusing on “individuality and human potential” instead of reducing “clients to pathological entities” (Hansen, 2005, p. 406). As a result, training programs are primarily concerned with preparing counselors for practical work. In contrast, other fields stress positivistic research that relies upon reductionist discourses, controlled conditions and ways of knowing that are removed from the complexity of life (Mariage, Paxton-Buursma, & Bouck, 2004). This positivistic perspective is often seen as limited in its practical utility and often inherently alienates those in practice (Vanderlinde & van Braak, 2010). Indeed, according to Murray (2009), many practicing counselors view research in counseling and the practice of counseling as separate and unrelated areas. As counselors, counselor educators are likely to struggle with integrating their rich and complex clinical experiences with a way of knowing that prioritizes positivistic and reductionist discourses.

Working within a positivistic framework can pose problems for counselor educators serving as supervisors. For clinical supervisors, responding to the needs of those in practice and facilitating student counselor development are of central importance. Counselor educators and supervisors are called to help students learn evidence-based best practices detailed in research publications (Wester, 2007). However, according to Bangert and Baumberger (2005), research that increasingly values complex methodologies and statistical analyses is not likely to be easily understood by those in practice, thus rendering a majority of research largely unusable to practitioners. Counselor educators who supervise may find it difficult to reconcile how their research, which is required for tenure, does not appear to meet the needs of practicing counselors and students they supervise.

A positivistic framework also can conflict with counselor educators' pedagogical perspectives. This is particularly true for those who emphasize social justice, advocacy or multicultural approaches, as positivistic approaches tend to create and reinforce a rigid hierarchy between those who produce knowledge and those who consume it. For example, conducting or relating research that an educator knows might be incomprehensible to practitioners could be seen as an endorsement of practitioners' role as passive consumers of knowledge. This construction of producers and consumers of research may promote traditional models that fail to consider "broader social contexts, particularly where social injustices occur" (Brubaker, Puig, Reese, & Young, 2010, p. 89). Because the explicit aim of the counseling field is to incorporate pedagogies that reflect social justice and multicultural perspectives (CACREP, 2009), counselor educators may find their pedagogies and research expectations in conflict. This conflict has important implications for the research-to-practice gap, as it reifies rigid roles of knowledge producers and knowledge consumers, and impedes the dialogic process needed to successfully translate valuable research from academia to practitioners' work in the field.

The conflict between the research environment and the values and identity of counselor educators seems to be a substantial barrier to improving the field's engagement with research. With this in mind, the extreme variability in the quantity and quality of research being produced makes sense (Lambie et al., 2014; Paradise & Dufrene, 2010). In fact, the current research-training environment may force counselor educators to choose between a research identity and client/student-focused identity. Those attempting to fully embrace both identities may experience Bateson's classic double bind situation that leads to untenable and fragmented identities (Bateson, Jackson, Haley, & Weakland, 1956).

The Research-to-Practice Gap and Counselor Training

For many practitioners, the only engagement they have with statistics or research design occurs in mandated courses taken during graduate training. While the courses are required to cover basic research education (CACREP, 2009), time and practical limitations make it unlikely that students will emerge prepared to effectively utilize published research (Bangert & Baumberger, 2005). This situation all but ensures that students will enter the field unable to engage in a productive dialogue with researchers or produce their own research, a disconcerting fact for those concerned by the lack of evidence-based practice in the field.

Research and statistics courses also generally occupy an inconspicuous role within counselor education programs. If these topics are taught by noncounseling faculty, it may implicitly communicate to students that research and statistics are not within the scope of the counselor identity. At best, students learn to engage with research in a language that is separate from their emerging clinical selves. More often they find the language of research incomprehensible to their clinical selves. In either situation, students' counselor identities have a gap between research and practice at their inception (Reisetter et al., 2004).

Counselor educators may feel unprepared to teach classes in research and statistics, which may be due to the education they received in graduate school. The method by which doctoral students prepare to become counselor educators appears to contribute to the research-to-practice gap. Unlike master's-level students,

many doctoral students engage with faculty on research, hopefully benefitting from a productive mentoring relationship that is crucial for future scholarly productivity (Paradise & Dufrene, 2010). Unfortunately, emphasis is seldom placed on training doctoral students to supervise research. The research-training environment equates knowledge and skill in research with the ability to supervise others to conduct effective research. This process is akin to training students as clinicians and assuming that they are prepared to provide clinical supervision for others. Wester and Borders (2011) state that “the counseling profession has competencies for many other aspects of counseling” (p. 1), including supervision, but lacks these for research. Having a skill set in counseling practice does not automatically qualify one to supervise others in practice; this also is true for research and research supervision. This failure to prepare doctoral students in the skills of supervising research is an unfortunate missed educational opportunity that contributes to the maintenance of the research-to-practice gap.

With the limited content, knowledge and skills and fragmented identities in counselor training programs, the research-to-practice gap appears to naturally emerge from the research-training environment. Within this environment, a best-case scenario is for individual researchers to develop sufficient skills to produce high-quality research and hope that this research will trickle down to those in practice. Unfortunately, even in this best-case scenario there is reason to assume that the research-to-practice gap will persist. The field of counselor education has been called upon to improve the quality and quantity of published research, particularly research that practitioners can easily utilize (Murray, 2009). We, the authors, suggest that animating the research process with counseling-related values may serve to reduce the gap between research and practice.

Addressing the Research-to-Practice Gap

The literature has attempted to address the research-to-practice gap in several ways. Suggested interventions have focused on both practical means of addressing the gap and ways to shift the epistemological foundations of research in counselor education. Both of these directions seek to reduce the gap and unify research and practice professional identities. One notable practical suggestion in the literature involves increasing practitioner collaboration in research (Horsfall, Cleary, & Hunt, 2011). Building partnerships with community stakeholders has been identified as the most effective way to ensure that research is relevant and timely for counseling practitioners (Becker, Stice, Shaw, & Woda, 2009). Engaging stakeholders involves fostering relationships and useful dialogues between those in academia and those in practice, thus challenging the current construction of the relationship that limits the role of practitioners to passive consumers of research conducted by those in academia. In order to develop these relationships, counselor educators have been challenged to engage in a collaborative research process that builds relationships, addresses the felt needs of those in practice and disseminates research in a manner translatable to those in practice (Murray, 2009).

Solutions that build upon the strengths of the counseling field in developing relationships and working collaboratively toward felt needs are congruent with the values that undergird the roles of clinician, supervisor and educator. Unfortunately, such solutions also require a significant investment of time and energy on the part of the researcher—a notable problem in the *publish or perish* world. These practical suggestions also do not address the continued development of both researchers and practitioners who lack a congruent professional identity.

In addition to practical suggestions, the literature has proposed a shift toward post-positivistic epistemologies. Levers et al. (2008) suggested that qualitative inquiries are of particular utility for the counseling field, as they allow researchers to engage about lived experiences and do not unnecessarily reduce complex human experience to unrecognizable parts. Post-positivistic approaches have been suggested to be more consistent with the values of the counseling field and, as a result, more easily digestible by those in practice (Moran, 2011; Rennie, 1994).

While post-positivistic paradigms may provide an engagement in research that is more congruent with counseling identity and values, quantitative data is still more highly valued and expected by many universities. Counselor training does not always emphasize training in qualitative methods, making consistent production of quality qualitative research difficult for academics and practitioners alike. The utility of qualitative methodologies may therefore be limited in much the same way as quantitative research is limited. Without research as a congruent part of the professional identities of both practitioners and counselor educators, the research-to-practice gap will continue.

One potential remedy for cultivating this post-positivistic identity is to provide students with opportunities to engage in practical research experiences and to pursue their own research interests while in counseling training (Murray, 2009). Practical engagement in research can help students to develop and integrate research as one strand of the overall professional counselor identity (Sexton, 2000). This will prime a relationship in which students graduate ready to benefit from creating and collaborating on research.

Changing the counseling field's engagement with research is necessary if the field is to reduce the research-to-practice gap. Currently, counselor education's relationship with research appears to be unsettled, leaving the field with a fractured identity. This fractured identity is evident both in the lingering research-to-practice gap and in the way counselors engage with research in training programs. The field of counselor education must find a way to engage both academics and practitioners in research in a way that provides a unified and credible professional identity. The authors suggest that counselor educators need not look far for the solution to this problem. The field must act on counseling values, embrace research as an important component of counselor identity and create a coherent narrative around research. Animating research in counselor education with counseling values is warranted (Mariage et al., 2004). We, the authors, carried out a model that sought to create a new and effective method for engaging in research within counseling and counselor education. Known as the Master's-Doctoral Collaborative Research Group (MDCRG), this model may offer one avenue for changing the field's engagement with research.

Overview of the MDCRG

For many students, the current graduate research-training environment does not provide a sufficient structure to develop the skills and identity necessary for a productive engagement with research. This is particularly unfortunate, as the experience of these authors has shown that master's-level students are eager for opportunities to develop their research skills and to pursue topics of interest to them. This eagerness communicates an unmet need in counselor training; however, there appear to be few opportunities for master's-level students to participate in research in meaningful ways and develop this core component of their professional identity (Owenz & Hall, 2011). By providing a structured experience animated with the values of the counseling field, counselor educators can actively change the current paradigm of research training.

Animating Research with Counseling Values

The research process may be expanded and enhanced through the infusion of values that guide clinical, pedagogical and supervisory practices. The authors suggest that training future practitioners in a research model that is congruent with counselor professional identity may allow for increased research engagement. Developing new approaches and ideas about effective research training is necessary. While many foundational values undergird counselor education (Eaves, Erford, & Fallon, 2010; Gladding, 2013; Hackney & Cormier, 2013), four are particularly relevant for a research context. These values include the power of relationships (Sheperis & Ellis, 2010), empowerment (Eaves et al., 2010), a developmental perspective (Gladding, 2013; Hackney & Cormier, 2013), and experiential education (CACREP, 2009).

The power of relationships. The establishment of a collaborative, supportive relationship between participants is central to the success of counseling and counselor supervision (Blocher, 1983; Sheperis & Ellis, 2010). Green and Herget stated that the quality of the therapeutic alliance is one of the “most powerful predictors of client outcome” (as cited in Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010, p. 9) in counseling. Additionally, characteristics of the supervisory relationship, such as support and encouragement, contribute to the success of clinical supervision (Leddick & Dye, 1987). Research is often conducted in the isolated academic world and disseminated to a small group. This traditional construction ignores the power of relationships in creating successful outcomes and connections in the research process. Infusing relationships into the processes of research and research supervision is a central goal of the MDCRG.

Empowerment. Eaves et al. (2010) identified empowerment as a central element of counseling philosophy, stating that the goal of promoting empowerment is to help clients “gain the confidence to navigate their future lives and problems” (p. 7). Empowering future counselors with the skills and abilities to address challenges in the practice of counseling is also critical. Congruent with this value, master’s-level student researchers can be empowered to find their research voices through full collaboration in each step of the research process. Students present different needs and desires for engaging in the experience. For example, some want to develop a deeper understanding of the research process, some want to explore specific topics through research, and others want to reduce perceived gaps in the knowledge base. In the MDCRG, the doctoral-level supervisors provide a space where group members can share their research needs and advocate for their ideas. The group collectively determines research topics, direction and products, with each member having an equal voice in the process. This structure seeks to empower students and strengthen student research identity and professional voices.

Developmental perspective. The use of developmental theory to conceptualize and promote growth has undergirded the field of counseling for many years (Gladding, 2013), and it has been heavily utilized to frame clinical supervision (Blocher, 1983). Broadly speaking, the developmental perspective rests on the assumption that the correct balance of support and challenge promotes individual growth. While the use of developmental theory in research supervision has not yet been documented in the current counseling literature, it is a useful model in the research context as well. Taking a developmental pedagogical stance throughout the process, MDCRG doctoral research supervisors utilize the skills of teaching, supporting and challenging students to promote growth in their research abilities. In order to accomplish this, research supervisors adjust the amount of environmental support and structure as group members develop their ability to engage in the research process.

Experiential education. Counselor training has historically utilized active, experiential pedagogical strategies (Hackney & Cormier, 2013). A central component of counselor education is the clinical field work that occurs during counseling practicum and internship experiences (CACREP, 2009). Employing a similar model of experiential education, the MDCRG is designed to offer both master’s and doctoral students opportunities to engage in a practical experience of conducting research and research supervision. Master’s-level researchers actively participate in each step of the research process, including generating research topics, conducting literature reviews, formulating research designs, collecting and analyzing data, and writing for publication. Further, doctoral students gain practical experience in supervising and supporting others’ research. This type of practical engagement has been suggested as a way to reduce the research-to-practice gap (Murray, 2009). Utilizing experiential pedagogical strategies in research training will create a unified approach across different components of counselor education.

The counseling values of relationship, empowerment, developmental perspective and experiential education animate the research process in the MDCRG. The resulting model provides a possible new avenue for more effective research training in counselor education. The context, structure, stages and outcomes of this model are described and discussed in the following section.

Context for the MDCRG

The MDCRG was conceptualized and put into place when the first author, a third-year doctoral candidate at the time, was approached independently by several master's students expressing a desire to become involved in research. These students expressed interest in actively engaging in the research process in order to explore areas of interest in clinical practice. They were satisfied neither with the level of research training they had received in their graduate program, nor with the role of consumer of research that was implied in the research training.

The counselor education program that housed the MDCRG consisted of a CACREP-accredited master's program in Community Counseling and School Counseling, and a CACREP-accredited doctoral program in Counselor Education and Supervision. Each program traditionally required 2 and 3 years, respectively, to complete. Within the counselor education program there was little precedence for the collaboration of faculty with master's students on research, as doctoral students often filled these roles. Given the desire of these energetic and motivated master's students to experience the research process firsthand, this situation constituted an unfortunate gap in the counselor training experience. Graduating without meaningful engagement in research would likely result in a continuation of the research-to-practice gap for these students.

Overall Structure of the Group

Membership in each MDCRG included three types of roles: (1) doctoral student research supervisors, (2) a faculty advisor and (3) master's-level researchers. A third-year doctoral student served as the lead research supervisor and a second-year doctoral student partnered to supervise the group. This tiered leadership configuration created a developmental structure that prepared the less-advanced doctoral student with the skills needed to lead the next iteration of the MDCRG. Doctoral research supervisors recruited first- and second-year master's students via e-mail, and received support from a faculty advisor. In this developmental structure, second-year master's students mentored first-year students, and first-year students prepared to take on mentoring roles in the following academic year. Thus, the group was designed to be developmental and cyclical, so that over time all students continually advanced to greater levels of responsibility and skill. The MDCRG was an ongoing experience within the counselor education program, with each group working together for the duration of an academic year. The groups progressed through four stages, as described in the following section (summarized in Table 1).

Stage 1: Forming the group. The initial step in forming the MDCRG is the establishment of the leadership structure and support from program faculty. Once the research supervision leadership is established (two doctoral research supervisors and a faculty advisor), recruitment for master's-level researchers begins. All current master's students receive an e-mail describing the MDCRG as a fully collaborative and hands-on research experience and inviting the students to attend an information meeting. Potential participants learn that expectations for participation include attendance at weekly research meetings, as well as active contribution to research tasks including collection and analysis of data, writing and presenting. Groups typically have approximately nine members, including two doctoral research supervisors, a faculty advisor and six master's-level researchers.

Once the membership in the group is established, the group begins its work. Consistent with a developmental model of supervision (Hunt, Butler, Noy, & Rosser, 1978), throughout stage 1, supervisors adopt an active role and provide high levels of structure and support. Initial sessions focus on establishing the structure for weekly meetings, identifying goals and forming working relationships among the group. Master's-level researchers are encouraged to engage in the formation and direction of the group. In order to empower the master's-level researchers, the research supervisors facilitate conversations that focus on what each member of the group wants to achieve and experience.

Research supervisors seek to model open communication by providing an atmosphere in which the group can productively discuss potential pitfalls in collaborative research. For example, in a group that the authors conducted, the group members examined the challenge of establishing order of authorship on presentations or publications when working in a group. The research supervisors shared personal experiences of how this can arise as an issue and presented various options for deciding authorship. Together the group conferred and selected a method for resolving this situation.

Stage 2: Research preparation. In this stage, groups select research topics, apply for IRB approval (if necessary), write research grants and submit conference presentation proposals. Again, in order to empower master's-level researchers, all members of the group are invited to present topics of interest to the group for consideration. Research supervisors teach relevant research skills as needed, including how to turn a topic of interest into a researchable project with specific research questions and methodologies. The group discusses all potential research topics that members bring as possibilities. As a group, they select research topics, develop research questions and choose methodologies for conducting the research.

Once they have identified a specific project, group members elect to engage in various scholarly activities, including submitting research grant proposals and conference presentation proposals. For example, in the model the authors carried out, one group chose to research how CACREP-accredited programs engaged in program evaluations and used those evaluations to improve programs, while another group pursued its interest in training gaps in preparing students to work with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) clients. As needed, research supervisors teach master's-level researchers about preparing grant and conference proposals. All group members are responsible for drafting portions of proposals. Finally, all of the group members edit compiled proposals and then submit them for consideration.

Stage 3: Active research. All members are fully engaged during this stage, in which data are collected and analyzed. Research supervisors coach master's-level researchers on appropriate data collection procedures. Each member is responsible for segments of the data collection and analysis. When problems arise, group members work together to brainstorm solutions. At various points, members take the lead on pieces of the research process. For example, in one group, a master's researcher who was particularly skilled in spreadsheet software created the spreadsheet used in data tracking and analysis. At times, members are not able to attend weekly meetings in person because of illness or travel, but attend these meetings remotely using technology such as instant messaging or video chatting. Throughout the process, doctoral supervisors take the opportunity to teach research concepts, processes or procedures as needed.

During this stage, groups prepare conference presentations that disseminate their research. Because most of the master's researchers have never presented at a professional conference, doctoral supervisors share experiences of past conference presentations to order to teach master's-level researchers how to put on a professional, well-prepared and engaging conference presentation. The researchers identify important pieces of preliminary results and decide how to structure the presentations. Each member is responsible for preparing and presenting pieces of the research during the presentation. In the group meetings before the conference, group members practice their presentation together. Presentations at professional conferences are often peak moments for the groups.

Stage 4: Writing and closure. As data collection and analysis end, groups prepare to disseminate the results of their research through writing. Again, doctoral supervisors teach master's-level researchers the skills and process of scholarly writing. All members are responsible for drafting pieces of manuscripts. The group members discuss and edit drafts on a weekly basis. Once the groups have concluded their work, doctoral

supervisors finalize manuscripts to unify the voices of various authors, and then submit them for review with appropriate publishing venues.

The close of the academic year also brings the end of the research group experience. Consistent with clinical values, the doctoral supervisors believe that an important element of any group is to reflect on the experience to provide opportunities for celebration and closure. At the conclusion of the experience, research supervisors facilitate group reflection, encouraging master's-level researchers to consider and share what they learned about themselves, about research and about their roles as counselors. Closing celebratory dinners are held as final group sessions.

Table 1

MDCRG Timeline and Tasks by Stage

Stage	Timeline	Tasks
1: Forming	September	Select group leadership Recruit master's-level researchers Set up group structure
2: Research Preparation	October–November	Select research topic Apply for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval Apply for research grants Apply for conference presentations
3: Active Research	December–March	Collect data Analyze data Conference presentation
4: Writing and Closure	April–May	Manuscript preparation Reflection Celebration and closure

Outcome and Evaluation

Each iteration of the MDCRG has been successful in both content and process. The groups produced scholarly work including the following: one published article in a professional, refereed journal; a CACREP-funded student research grant; three professional presentation sessions at a state-level counseling conference; implementation of a training program on working with LGBT clients in a multicultural course; a professional presentation at a regional counseling conference; and two articles published in a regional counseling newsletter. These accomplishments have exceeded the expectations of all involved. In addition, of the master's-level researchers involved during the first 2 years, two researchers have now completed doctoral degrees in Counselor Education and Supervision, others are currently in doctoral programs, and others have advanced to clinical practice. All of the doctoral-level supervisors are now working as counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs.

Beyond the scholarly accomplishments that the groups achieved, master's-level researchers gained new skills, knowledge and perspectives about research. After two iterations of the group, doctoral research supervisors conducted an informal survey with which to assess the learning outcomes of the MDCRG experience for master's-level researchers. Participants were asked to respond in writing to prompts on their

experiences within the group. Questions included but were not limited to the following: (1) What was the experience of being in the MDCRG like for you?; (2) What were the most important things you learned about the research process while you were in the group?; and (3) Did your participation in the group change how you see your role as a counselor?

Responding to the informal survey of their experiences in the MDCRG, several master's-level researchers reflected on how the group influenced their practical knowledge of research. They reported learning about the importance of maintaining focus on the research questions, the importance of persistence in finding peer-reviewed and current articles, and the importance of using a timeline to keep the research on track. One master's-level researcher reflected, "I feel I have the necessary tools in order to research articles, write an article that is tailored to the journal/newsletter, and submit it to a newsletter and conference."

One of the most valuable experiences that the master's-level researchers reported was engaging in a collaborative research process with peers. Researchers stated that they learned "the value of one's colleagues in the research process," the value of "decision making as a group" and the value of "being able to collaboratively decide on a topic," such as how to divide the work and how to decide authorship.

Master's-level researchers also reported that participation in the MDCRG positively affected their academic program. They reported translating their learning from the MDCRG into academic classes. One student stated, "I bring the knowledge I gained to the classroom." Another said that the group "enriched my academics," while others expressed that it "highlighted the lack of research done at the master's level in this program." Having an opportunity to explore their own interests in the research process led several master's-level researchers to take a more active role in their coursework. Additionally, the group gave researchers the opportunity to develop collaborative relationships with other students that they "otherwise would not have had." Students reported benefitting from the cross-cohort connections and mentoring.

Master's-level researchers also stated that they could clearly see a link between their experiences within the MDCRG and their counseling practice. One master's-level researcher reflected that "the subject matter of the research enhanced my ability to be a more culturally competent counselor for LGBTQ individuals and made me a resource for colleagues that were not in the research group." Another student stated that the group "solidified the importance of research in responsible, current practice." A third stated that her experience highlighted the need for additional research and advocacy.

The final theme that the students mentioned when responding to the informal survey is encouraging in light of the research-to-practice gap. Participant responses reflected a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the role of research in counseling. One student said that "[my] understanding of the importance of conducting research motivates me to be involved and . . . engage in the research already being conducted at my agency of employment." Other students suggested that their greatest growth came in understanding "how to communicate ideas and also how my ideas can be strengthened/further developed through collaboration." The research-to-practice gap may be reduced through producing students who emerge from training programs viewing research as part of their professional identity.

Implications and Conclusion

The research-to-practice gap has been a persistent problem in counselor education that may be attributed to incongruence between how the research process has historically been constructed and the values central to counseling. This gap is reflected in the low rates of publication by counselor educators and in graduating counselors' lack of readiness to engage in research (Bangert & Baumberger, 2005; Lambie et al., 2014). The

call for evidence-based practices will likely continue to increase and will result in greater demand for all types of research. For the field of counseling to grow and stay relevant in an era of increasing need and decreasing resources, a change in research training and practice will be necessary. Meaningful change necessitates a cultural shift that animates the research process with the values that guide clinical, supervisory and pedagogical perspectives. This type of change would facilitate a more productive and effective relationship between counseling practitioners, counselor educators and researchers. In order to reduce the research-to-practice gap, counselors must emerge from graduate programs prepared to utilize and to produce high-quality, relevant research. Until the counseling field engages in the research process in a way that is consistent with practitioners' values, the field's interactions with research will continue to be limited to a small handful of individuals, and the research-to-practice gap that inherently limits the potentiality of both practitioners and academics will continue. Counselor educators are uniquely suited to lead this charge and promote a congruent sense of professional identity that includes research. As a field, counseling can be a model for how the social sciences prepare themselves for the continued push toward evidence-based practice.

Research is a fixture of academic life. Counselor educators, in collaboration with counseling students and practitioners, could embark on new lines of inquiry that seek to better understand the relationship between research and the field of counseling. Several areas for future research are suggested. First, studies are needed that examine meaningful and productive ways to teach master's students how to engage with research. Second, models for research collaboration between researchers and practitioners should be studied and implemented. Third, understanding how practicing counselors utilize or do not utilize published research could inform a change in pedagogical practices. Finally, conducting empirical research on the model presented in this article would offer deeper understanding of the impact of the model on students as future practitioners.

The model outlined above offers a possible avenue for providing effective research training for counseling students, for creating a congruent identity as a field and for reducing the research-to-practice gap. The lived experience of using this model illustrates that it offers a realistic and sustainable approach for research training in counselor education. It shows that students are eager to change their relationship with research, and that by responding with professional values, counselors can make a meaningful difference in the research-to-practice gap.

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Counseling People Displaced by War: Experiences of Refugees from the Former Yugoslavia



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The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of refugees from the former Yugoslavia who migrated to the United States as a result of the civil wars in the 1990s. The present research utilized a phenomenological method, in which the researchers collected data using in-depth interviews with 10 participants; analyzed the data themes relating to the pre- and post-migration experiences; and documented high rates of exposure to war-related violence and the presence of multiple stressors during resettlement. The study offers an integration of the collective essence and meaning of refugees' experiences. Findings suggested that being a refugee and resettling in a new country constitute a complex and life-changing process. Overall, the results indicated that the migration process for refugees from the former Yugoslavia was modulated by stressors during the war, migration and resettlement. The study concludes with a discussion of implications for counseling practice and counselor education.

Keywords: civil wars, refugees, migration, Yugoslavia, resettlement, stressors

Violent conflicts throughout the world have left millions of people displaced, some within their own country (the internally displaced) and some across international borders (refugees). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that in 2010, 43.7 million people from over 125 countries were forcibly displaced from their homes by civil or interstate war (2011), and that the expense of meeting needs was nearly \$2 billion. The psychological impact of war has been widely acknowledged and well documented (Miller & Rasco, 2004; Miller, Weine, et al., 2002; Mollica, 2006; Murthy & Lakshminarayana, 2006; Porter & Haslam, 2001; Summerfield, 2003; van den Heuvel, 1998).

The most frequently reported consequence of war exposure is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), followed by depression, recurrent nightmares, insomnia, chronic hyperarousal, impaired concentration and irritability (Miller & Rasco, 2004). It has been estimated that 50% of refugees experienced higher levels of PTSD, depression and other psychiatric problems (de Jong, Scholte, Koeter, & Hart, 2000), with the lifetime prevalence of PTSD among specific groups of trauma survivors ranging from 15%–24%, compared to 8% in the general United States population (de Jong et al., 2001). PTSD is associated with long-term physical health problems, higher mortality rates and heart disease (Hamblen & Schnurr, 2007).

One country in particular, the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, experienced similar issues. The breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s produced an estimated 992,200 refugees and 1,203,000 internally displaced people, which constituted 3% of the total population (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [USDHHS], 1999). From 1983–1999, the United States accepted an estimated 200,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia (USDHHS, 1999). Furthermore, in 1998 and 1999, refugees from the former Yugoslavia

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were the largest refugee group admitted into the United States, representing 36% of all arrivals (USDHHS, 1999).

Consistent with other wars, the hardships in the former Yugoslavia were particularly acute for women, children and the elderly (Weiss & Pasic, 1998). Thousands of people suffered through war trauma, persecution, torture, abrupt and sometimes repeated displacements, physical violence against themselves or their family, rape and other forms of sexual violence. As a result of this exposure, refugees from the former Yugoslavia have reported high rates of depressive symptoms, PTSD and other trauma-related issues (Porter & Haslam, 2001; Vojvoda, Weine, McGlashan, Becker, & Southwick, 2008; Weine et al., 1998).

Purpose of Study

Resettling in the United States is not an easy process, and many refugees experience numerous problems in their new host country. Some of these problems include “poverty, illiteracy, prolonged dependence on government aid, cultural differences, social isolation, the language barrier, and loss of status” (Carlson & Rosser-Hogan, 1993, p. 224). Humanitarian organizations have primarily been concerned with the material and medical needs of refugees, largely ignoring mental health needs (Mollica, Cui, McInnes, & Massagli, 2002). Mollica (2006) noted that it is worrisome that psychological support for victims of war has been so limited and often nonexistent.

Miller and Rasco (2004) stated that there is a substantial need to collect and explore the stories of forced displacement from refugees themselves. They stated that in much of the research on refugees, “the voices of refugees are largely absent” (p. 343), noting that researchers have underutilized qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews, which are more effective in deepening understanding of the range of stressors, challenges and experiences that refugees commonly face. Miller, Worthington, Muzurovic, Tipping, and Goldman (2002) explained that in order to understand people’s life in exile, it is necessary to first understand their central reference point, which is their life before the forced migration. Although psychological assessments and quantitative methods can specify patterns of distress, Miller, Worthington, et al. (2002) suggested capturing the historical aspects of refugee experiences by utilizing thick descriptions and phenomenological exploration. Furthermore, many studies in the literature support the assertion that pre- and post-migration experiences can have an impact on the mental health of refugees (Mollica, 2006; Mollica et al., 2002; Silove, 1999). The primary purpose of this study was to achieve better understanding of the experiences, attitudes, perceptions and mental health needs of refugees as they coped with their traumatic war past and challenges in adjusting to United States society. Secondly, the results provide counselor educators, school counselors and mental health counselors with the education, suggestions and strategies necessary to work with refugees displaced by war.

Method

Participants

Participants were 10 refugees from the former Yugoslavia, resettled in the Midwestern United States. There were six female and four male participants. Their ages ranged from 38–63 years, with a mean of 49.5 years. Eight participants originated from Bosnia, one from Serbia, and one from Croatia. All 10 participants had lived in another country (e.g., Germany) before coming to the United States; therefore, participants had experienced displacement multiple times. The number of years that participants had been in the United States ranged from 8–20, with a mean of 12.7 years. Educational backgrounds ranged from vocational training to graduate professional degrees. Nine participants were employed at the time of the interviews and one was retired. All of the participants were married; nine had children and two had grandchildren.

Primary Researcher's Background

Qualitative research is personal in nature, and the identity and experiences of the researcher influence the results that are produced (McLeod, 2002). The first author was born and raised in Belgrade, the capital of the former Yugoslavia. The researcher left the former Yugoslavia in 1988, several years before the war began. Based on personal experiences and acquired knowledge, her assumptions included the following: (a) participants were resilient despite the traumatic events and stressors they were exposed to; (b) most participants did not seek professional help (e.g., counseling services), but engaged in talking with friends and family members; and (c) participants were likely to miss their home country, old friends and culture.

Procedure

A convenience and snowball sampling method was used in two communities in the Midwest. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (a) participants were older than 25 years of age (in order to remember their pre-migration experiences); (b) participants were Yugoslav citizens who had lived in the former Yugoslavia; and (c) participants had relocated to the United States as a direct result of the 1991–1995 civil wars. The first author scheduled a personal meeting with each individual who expressed interest in participating, in order to explain the nature of the study and discuss issues of confidentiality, informed consent and freedom to terminate participation at any time. This meeting included a detailed review of the consent form, ensuring that potential participants fully understood the purpose of this study and agreed to take part. The authors provided consent forms in English and in Serbian/Bosnian/Croatian, depending on the participant's language of choice; the authors also explained confidentiality and privacy throughout the research process.

Upon obtaining consent, the authors asked participants to fill out a demographic questionnaire, and then collected data through semi-structured interviews, which were recorded, transcribed verbatim and translated. Nine interviews were conducted in Serbian/Bosnian/Croatian and one in English. The first author translated the transcripts, and her husband verified the translations for accuracy. (The first author's husband is fluent in English and Serbian/Bosnian/Croatian, and is not connected to this research project.) As a prerequisite of conducting translation verification services, the author's husband took part in institutional review board (IRB) training and became familiar with the tenets of qualitative research interviewing. The first author conducted interviews in private homes—some in the participants' homes and some in mutual acquaintances' homes. Interviews lasted from 1–2 hours, depending on the amount of information provided. In qualitative research there is no fixed number of participants. Creswell (2007) suggested interviewing 5–25 individuals through single in-depth interviews or multiple interviews, until saturation of data is achieved. After careful consideration, the first author conducted in-depth interviews with 10 participants, which allowed her to reach the point of saturation. She asked participants at the end of the interviews and during the verification process whether they wanted to add anything to their story.

The present study was part of a doctoral dissertation, and the university's IRB and dissertation research committee approved the protocol. To ensure confidentiality, the authors locked all notes, tapes and flash drives in a file cabinet, and did not identify participants by their first or last names or with any other information (the names that appear in this paper are fictitious).

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What are the key themes, contexts and processes in the integration of pre-migration experiences for refugees from the former Yugoslavia?
2. What are the key themes, contexts and processes in the integration of post-migration experiences for refugees from the former Yugoslavia?

This study sought to explore what it means to be a refugee from the former Yugoslavia by understanding the thoughts, beliefs and feelings that the participants have about their displacement and forced migration. In order to gain a deeper awareness of the participants' experiences, the first author asked open-ended, culturally sensitive questions, utilizing an informal, conversational tone. The interviews explored topics and issues that included pre-migration, arrival, reception in the United States and post-migration, following the chronological stages of migration. The authors pretested the questions and protocol with two practice interviews in order to assess how effectively the questions would work and whether they would obtain the type of information they sought (Berg, 2007). The purpose of the pilot study was to determine whether the questions were easily understood and culturally appropriate, and whether the research protocol was adequate. The author asked pilot study participants to give their feedback about the interview process and identify any modifications that needed to be made. The Appendix provides a complete list of interview questions, which the authors used only as a general structure for gathering information and not as a script. The authors modified questions during the interviews, depending on what appeared comfortable and what a participant shared spontaneously.

Data Analysis

In phenomenological research, the transcriptions are reduced into emerging themes, which are linked thematically until a full description is derived (Moustakas, 1994). The qualitative software used in this research was ATLAS.ti 6.2. After coding all transcripts, the authors identified emerging themes by grouping and classifying similar answers, and then used the themes to construct the narrative describing what the experience meant to the participants. In order to ensure trustworthiness, the authors used three strategies (Creswell, 2007). First, the participants verified the findings for accuracy of interpretation. Second, the authors shared the findings with committee members. Third, the authors asked a peer reviewer to look over the material and react to the themes that emerged. The authors then incorporated the feedback from participants, committee members, and the peer reviewer into the themes. The results are categorized by research question: experiences during pre-migration and experiences during post-migration.

Results

Experiences During Pre-Migration

Participants' responses were organized into three major categories: (1) living well, (2) tensions building, and (3) the war experience and its effects (Table 1).

Table 1

Pre-Migration Perspectives

Code and Major Categories	Code and Theme	Code and Subtheme
1. Living well	1.1 Multinational society 1.2 Normal, good life	
2. Tensions building		
3. War experiences and their effects	3.1 Hardship 3.2 Trauma conditions 3.3 The experience of loss 3.4 Escape	3.1.1 Displacement 3.1.2 Severe living conditions 3.1.3 Loss of freedom 3.2.1 Fear 3.2.2 Other mental health stress

Note. Code indicates thematic hierarchy.

Living well. *Living well* incorporated the participants' perceptions of life before the war. All the participants described their lives as normal and stable, consisting of raising families, completing their education or finding employment. All the participants characterized the former Yugoslavia as a society in which people of all ethnicities lived in peace and harmony. Nikola described the multinational society (1.1) of the country as follows: "This country was a very special combination of religions and nationalities." Participants talked about the normal, good lives (1.2) they lived, with an emphasis on personal goals. Mira stated that their parents gave them a "comfortable life, and a safe home in which we didn't lack in anything."

Tensions building. This category emerged to describe the deteriorating situation in the country that created tension between different ethnic groups. Even when the war started in Slovenia in 1991, many participants did not believe that it would spread to the rest of the country (e.g., Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia); it seemed so distant. The situation was rapidly deteriorating, as Nina described:

Everything started changing; I could feel that there would be a war, first you could feel it at work, and you had to watch what you said because ethnic groups started talking against each other. We all knew and felt that something will happen.

The war experience and its effects. This category contained descriptions of what life was like during the war. The data were grouped into four themes: hardship (3.1), trauma conditions (3.2), the experience of loss (3.3) and escape (3.4).

Hardship (3.1). During the war, the civilian population experienced various forms of hardship. Participants described their hardship as displacement (3.1.1), severe living conditions (3.1.2) and loss of freedom (3.1.3). The following excerpt from Mira captures her experience when she was displaced from her home:

We didn't have anywhere to go nor did we know anybody there. With our bags in our hands and more bags over our shoulders, with three small kids in our arms, we were on the street. We were standing on the street like that and we looked around in all directions, wondering what to do.

Kristina described severe living conditions after being displaced from their home:

We would lie down next to each other, my husband, then my father, and then my mother, we all lined up like that in a line to sleep outside. The rest of the people were next to us, they lined up also. My children were between me and my mother, to shelter them and keep warm; we had no blankets to cover them with. That's how we slept for a week.

Life during the war was disrupted and difficult. Participants had to deal with many shortages of supplies, such as food, gasoline, water and electricity. After being left without work, participants did not have any real source of income. They experienced financial hardship, as explained by Daniel, who was forced into random, odd jobs:

I worked as a laborer at the local farms; I didn't have any other job. One day I would work with one farmer, the next with another. Some paid me and some didn't. I couldn't do anything about it, if they gave me some money, I was very pleased. But if they didn't I would move on.

According to the data, males and females experienced loss of freedom differently. Women and children often encountered loss of freedom as an inability to leave the area or an inability to move freely around the city or the

rest of the former Yugoslavia. Men often experienced loss of freedom as being subjected to forced mobilization, which was the case for two participants.

Trauma conditions (3.2). The overall experience of war directly resulted in conditions that led people to experience trauma and emotional suffering. The sense that one's life was in constant danger created conditions for participants to experience fear (3.2.1) and other mental health stress (3.2.2). Several participants talked about fear of mobilization, and the female participants were fearful for their husbands, brothers and fathers. Fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones was constant and overpowering. There was an overwhelming sense of the danger and risk that occurred in war situations as participants grasped the seriousness of their circumstances. Emma explained: "But maybe somebody will come and kill me, I can't tell you what the people were talking about around us." Living under the constant threat of death produced many different feelings for the participants: hopelessness, anger, guilt, shame, self-pity, deep sorrow, despair, anxiety and depression.

The experience of loss (3.3). The participants experienced loss throughout the displacement: family separations as well as loss of possessions, income, support, dreams, security and opportunity. Mira talked about losing everything: "All our material possessions were lost. That is not important any more, the only thing that was left worth fighting for were our lives." Participants also described the loss of hope, friends and country, as Mira stated:

We realized that the country we lived in just doesn't exist anymore and that was very difficult. We could not patch it up anymore. It was all lost and there is no going back. It was very difficult to accept that fact. We understood with great sorrow that we can't continue this way. We didn't know what to do.

Escape (3.4). As a result of participants escaping at different times during the conflict, their difficulties ranged from buying an airplane ticket to crossing the border in the middle of the night. Many participants escaped abruptly because of the war. Five participants talked about having to walk long distances with small children, without any food or shelter. During their escape, their lives continued to be in danger.

Experiences During Post-Migration

The categories that emerged in the post-migration phase were the following: (1) cultural shock, (2) resettlement support and (3) coping with challenges (Table 2).

Table 2

Post-Migration Perspectives

Code and Major Category	Code and Theme	Code and Subtheme
1. Cultural shock		
2. Resettlement support	2.1 Aid organizations 2.2 Relatives and family	
3. Coping with challenges	3.1 Learning English 3.2 Becoming employed 3.3 Cultural connections	3.3.1 Religion

Note. Code indicates thematic hierarchy.

Cultural shock. All 10 participants stated that their expectations did not match the realities of life in the United States. Sava had formed his expectations through Hollywood movies: “Basically now when I look back at the America I knew, it was the America that presented itself through movies. And real American people are not like the movies.” The participants’ emotional reactions in the early period of migration were varied. Kristina described her experience as follows:

When we first came here, it was terrible, it was a catastrophe. My husband and I were crying on our balcony every day. We cried because we didn’t know anything here, like we fell out of the sky. One moment we were thinking of taking our bags and packing to go back home. We thought there is no life for us here, this is not for us. We wanted to go anywhere but here.

Resettlement support. Individuals who came to the United States and were granted refugee status were eligible for certain short-term benefits, services and aid in the resettlement process. Most participants came to the United States with little money and few possessions, and therefore many depended on aid programs for financial assistance, housing and basic needs. Nina explained the help of aid organizations (2.1) as follows:

They helped us so much, three churches were helping us, they were so good to us. It was wonderful. The third day after our arrival they found us an apartment and they asked if we like[d] it, and we said we liked it very much.

Some participants had relatives (2.2) who had come to the United States earlier and were willing to help them. Mira explained:

They took us into their warm house and we spent almost a month with them; they helped us to figure things out, to find our own apartment, to start school and orientation, to get our social security numbers, and all of those initial things we completed with their help.

Coping with challenges. Participants reported varying challenges as they arrived and settled in the United States. They managed these difficulties by using effective coping strategies, such as learning English (3.1), becoming employed (3.2) and getting involved with the Yugoslavian community (3.3). The most common theme that emerged regarding post-migration difficulty was the language barrier. English language competence (3.1) was considered a survival skill. Without speaking English fluently, the participants experienced challenges in daily living, isolation and a lack of support. They relied heavily on interpreters and did not feel independent. Nina stated, “We came and we didn’t know even one word of English; even today I don’t know English very well, but back then I didn’t even know one word. We were not prepared at all.”

Based on the findings of this study, all the participants stated that getting a job (3.2) was very important in their adaptation process. All the participants who received aid wanted to become independent as quickly as possible and obtain a job that would provide an income for their basic needs. Working gave participants a sense of control over their lives, which made them feel better about themselves. In addition to emphasizing employment, the participants also indicated the importance of remaining connected to members of their cultural group (3.3). The impact of community on the participants’ adaptation in the United States was salient across the narratives. Bane said:

We always have big parties at my house; we have a great community here. I like it when everybody comes to my house. My house is small and the basement isn’t anything fancy, but the best parties and celebrations are at my house.

Five participants talked about religion (3.3.1) and spirituality. Ana described her experience: “We have a church, at the time when we came the priest was this wonderful man, he was so kind, so we went often while he was there.” Zoran reported strongly that being a member of the cultural community gives his life meaning and satisfaction. Several participants added that the community was a source of frustration for them, with divisions along ethnic lines.

Discussion

Many studies in the literature support the idea that pre- and post-migration experiences can have an impact on the mental health of refugees (Mollica, 2006; Mollica et al., 2002; Silove, 1999). The purpose of this study was to achieve better understanding of the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of refugees as they coped with their traumatic war past and challenges in adjustment to United States society.

Pre-Migration Perspectives

The first research question addressed the experiences of the participants in the former Yugoslavia before their forced migration. In the literature about refugees, it has been well recognized that experiencing war is difficult and traumatizing (Miller, Weine, et al., 2002; Porter & Haslam, 2001; Silove, 1999; Weine et al., 1998). The results of this qualitative study are consistent with similar research on refugee populations who have been displaced from their countries because of war. This study also provides new information specific to the within-context perspective of trauma and violence that took place in the former Yugoslavia. The adversity that the participants faced reflected a broader political and socioeconomic conflict; yet this study focused on a phenomenological view. Two things are unique to this population. First, most participants were surprised by the onset of war and were caught unprepared to deal with the daily hardships. Participants described the transition from a peaceful life to the war period as a time in which tension and danger were increasing and the threshold between peace and war was reached. Second, the male participants who were drafted into joining the war did not believe in the cause and were forced to fight against different ethnic groups.

Numerous research studies have established that refugees experience the first set of stressors in pre-migration prior to forced exile (Miller & Rasco, 2004; Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005). Silove (1999) developed the conceptual framework for understanding pre-migration experiences. The refugee experience contains an accumulation of stressors until a decision is reached to flee, which Silove (1999) referred to as the *continuum of stress*. As the participants in the present study stated, life-threatening events were a part of their daily lives in the war-torn country. The results indicated that the pre-migration experiences included exposure to war, sudden displacement, and loss of personal safety and security. The participants lived in fear, which they experienced as fear of mobilization and fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

As supported in the literature, participants voiced that the pre-migration phase was marked by major losses (Ryan, Dooley, & Benson, 2008; Silove, 1999), such as loss of freedom, employment, home, stability and security. The participants experienced considerable material deprivation and were able to take only a few documents with them before their escape. Many of their houses and other material belongings were totally destroyed. Participants in this study specifically discussed the loss of jobs, which represented the disappearance of their primary source of income and created financial hardship as they experienced “an ongoing accumulation of losses, challenges, [and] life changes” (Porter & Haslam, 2001, p. 818).

Traumas that occur in pre-migration have captivated the attention of researchers. Some researchers described refugee experiences from different regions around the world (Ager & Young, 2001) and some described

experiences from the former Yugoslavia (Miller, Worthington, et al., 2002; van den Heuvel, 1998). There are many similarities between experiences, yet each refugee story is unique. Refugees who have experienced war may be coping with emotional traumas resulting from witnessing bombardments and destruction, family separation and life in poverty conditions (Neuner et al., 2008). The participants in this study faced destruction of homes and communities, life-threatening events, danger, and forced participation in combat. These traumatic conditions caused emotional suffering, constituting the first set of stressors that have a negative impact on the mental health of refugees (Miller & Rasco, 2004). It is noted in the literature that some refugees from war-torn countries have lived under the constant threat and fear of death (Miller & Rasco, 2004); this finding is consistent with the results in this study. Some of the other mental health stress reactions that participants experienced were hopelessness, anger, guilt, shame, self-pity, despair, anxiety and depression.

In addition to mental health consequences, the participants in this study faced daily problems with safety, security and limited freedom of movement. The participants experienced loss of freedom, which manifested differently for men than for women and children. According to Weiss and Pasic (1998), the hardships in the former Yugoslavia were particularly acute for women, children and the elderly. This finding was supported by the experiences of the participants in this study. Due to constant bombardment, women and children were trapped in shelters, basements or abandoned houses. Men were forced to fight in the war and were separated from their families. Two of the four male participants in this study were forced into combat and did not have any other choice but to follow orders. They did not know who they were fighting against because friends and neighbors faced each other on the front lines. The other two male participants in this study were able to flee the country before they could be forced to fight in the war.

As reported in other studies (Ager & Young, 2001; Miller, Worthington, et al., 2002; van den Heuvel, 1998), refugees from the former Yugoslavia experienced serious challenges during the war. The present study confirmed this finding, as all 10 participants were affected by the war in the pre-migration phase. Participants lived in unstable and unsafe situations, with daily bombardment of their villages and cities. They experienced economic hardship, social disruption, violence, hiding from military forces, and the trauma of sudden or multiple displacements.

Post-Migration Perspectives

The second research question for this study explored post-migration experiences. Refugees who had survived traumatic experiences while living in a war zone now faced a new set of stressors, compounded by migration to a new and different environment (Ager, Malcolm, Sadollah, & O'May, 2002; Mosselson, 2009). Migration involves events that can be highly stressful, such as separation from familiar surroundings and being placed in a new and alien culture (Carballo & Nerukar, 2001). Based on the findings of this study, the experiences of the participants during the post-migration period included cultural shock, resettlement support, coping with challenges and cultural connections.

Refugees often face challenges in the post-migration phase of their refugee experiences (Davidson, Murray, & Schweitzer, 2008; Miller, Worthington, et al., 2002). The results of this study suggested that participants were inadequately informed or prepared for migration to the United States. This study found that the participants' early adjustment experiences were highly stressful, resulting in cultural shock. Cultural shock can precipitate feelings of helplessness and disorientation (Bemak, Chung, & Bornemann, 1996). The participants' first impressions of the United States were mostly negative, and they experienced difficulty operating in a new culture. The findings are consistent with the literature suggesting that refugees who depart from traditional routines and established social networks often suffer from social isolation and loss of social and occupational roles (Ager et al., 2002; Carballo & Nerukar, 2001). Many participants were disappointed when they first

arrived in the United States, and all 10 participants stated that their first impressions did not match the realities of life in the United States.

Coming to the United States was a second or third migration for some participants. While they were safe from immediate danger, experiences in the country of first or second asylum are often very stressful (Ager & Young, 2001). Participants in this study did not want to come to the United States, but the war forced them out of their homes and they were not able to settle anywhere else. There is a fundamental difference between immigrants who voluntarily leave their country and refugees who are forced to leave. This loss of control over the decision-making process regarding geographic location is an important factor in the adaptation process for a refugee (Bemak, Chung, & Bornemann, 1996).

The participants in this study experienced difficulties that were grouped into the theme *coping with challenges*. One of the primary challenges in the participants' resettlement was learning English. Knowledge of English is seen in the literature as a prerequisite for successful integration and an important aspect of adjustment (Djuretic, Crawford, & Weaver, 2007). One participant in this study was fluent in English upon arrival in the United States, but the other nine participants stated that they spoke little or no English when they resettled. The inability to read and write English made daily life very difficult. Participants relied on interpreters to take them to the doctor, fill out forms or open a bank account, and consequently they faced isolation and a lack of independence. Participants claimed that learning English was the most difficult challenge in their resettlement. The findings of this study demonstrate a need for programs that can help refugees learn English, which will help them find higher-paying jobs and decrease financial dependency on aid organizations.

Consistent with the literature, this study further uncovered strategies used for survival in a new system (Djuretic et al., 2007). These findings support Mollica's (2006) core psychological dimension of self-healing, in which the individual demonstrates a will to survive and recover. Opportunities to practice traditions from the home country, to participate in social activities and to work all have a positive impact on the body and mind. All participants became employed soon after resettlement, which was mostly due to the aid organizations. Participants stated that they were placed in jobs soon after arrival in order to decrease their dependency on financial aid. It seemed that immediate employment was the key objective for the aid organizations, and participants were relieved to become employed and self-sufficient, which provided stability for their families and allowed them to feel better about themselves. Participants stated that their goal was not to depend on aid organizations, but to build a new life, and to once again feel in charge of their destiny. Through working, participants were able to build new relationships and become socially involved in their new country. Becoming financially stable allowed two participants to send money to relatives in the former Yugoslavia; several participants tried to sponsor others to come to the United States.

The need to balance cultural connections with the home country and the host community can be stressful (Gray & Elliott, 2001). The literature suggests that from a psychological standpoint, cultural connections positively impacted the participants' adjustment to the new environment (Mollica, 2006). Refugees rely on social support during times of transition and resettlement (Simich, 2003). Isolation from natural support systems often leads to emotional vulnerability. The literature also suggests that access to co-ethnic and co-linguistic communities may have established better adjustment (Ager et al., 2002; Mollica, 2006).

Consistent with other research, the study participants identified social support as a key influence in their post-migration life. Porter and Haslam (2001) stated that refugees "are forced to reevaluate assumptions about their social roles, lives, and core identities" (p. 818). Participants in this study talked about the benefits of being connected with the Yugoslavian community, and they often turned to each other for friendship, information

and help during the stressful time of resettlement. This community not only offered familiarity and continuity of traditions, religion and language, but also served as a source of advice, emotional support and exchange of resources built on mutual recognition. Several participants invested money, time and effort in building a church and cultural center. Within the cultural community, individuals shared their pre-migration experiences and celebrated cultural traditions through holidays, food, music and dance. Support from family and friends with similar cultural backgrounds is vital for refugees to close the gap between two cultures (Simich, 2003). These cultural relationships provided social support and helped participants navigate the United States system.

Participants discussed the importance of maintaining cultural connections with the community from the former Yugoslavia. According to the data, some participants saw this community as a source of frustration and claimed that different groups from the former Yugoslavia could not get along in the United States as well, creating divisions along ethnic and religious lines. They encountered different groups from the former Yugoslavia in their workplaces and neighborhoods. The irony for the refugees was that people on all sides of the conflict that forced them to emigrate were now living as neighbors in the United States. Most passionate were Nikola and Daneil, who stated that the co-national social networks were a problem rather than an asset. Ethnic affiliation was difficult for participants with spouses from another ethnic group or parents from different ethnic backgrounds.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, the time that has elapsed since the experience of war and the participants' telling of their stories may be 15–20 years. Second, findings were limited by the small sample of participants and the geographical location of the study. This study used a purposive sample and not a random sample of refugees from the former Yugoslavia. Particular experiences of the participants may not be reflective of the larger immigrant and refugee population from the former Yugoslavia or of refugees from different parts of the world. Third, the composition of the sample may have been impacted by the researcher's social network in the Yugoslavian community. Fourth, the participants were given the choice of conducting interviews in their first language (Serbian/Bosnian/Croatian) or English. Describing events in their first language provided richer details and descriptions, although translation errors were possible, which could have contributed to misinterpretation or loss of meaning of the data. Fifth, in qualitative research there is a lack of anonymity during the interview process, which in itself may introduce some limitations. Since the first author is from the former Yugoslavia, the participants may have chosen to share perceptions, thoughts and feelings that would be most helpful to the researcher. The researcher's personal biases and assumptions based on experiences of immigration may have been a limitation in the interpretation of themes and the coding process.

In phenomenological research, the inquiry is autobiographical (Moustakas, 1994). This article is a reflection of the authors' interpretations, which are based on our cultural, social, class and gender beliefs (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the first author's own experiences with migration issues and the collapse of Yugoslavia framed the research and interpretive process.

Suggestions for Counselor Educators and Counseling Professionals

It is essential for counselor educators to develop their understanding of refugee populations so that counselors-in-training can improve their cultural proficiency. Counselor educators could benefit from (a) developing courses with a focus on the experiences of refugees or infusing refugee topics into existing courses, (b) inviting speakers with refugee experiences, and (c) generating lists of community resources, with training on how to investigate these resources. Counselor educators can become leaders in educating other professionals who work with refugees and immigrants, such as law-enforcement personnel, social workers and health professionals.

It is recommended that a course on refugee and immigrant issues become an integral part of any counselor training program, in order to prepare new counselors to work in a complex and multicultural world. While a separate course related to refugee, immigrant and wartime experiences would be ideal, it may not be possible for counselor education programs. In a more practical way, educators and counselor education programs would be well served to add these elements to existing courses. For example, counselor educators could add special topics to diversity courses on the causes of international migration, the history of immigration in the United States and refugee policies worldwide. In addition, it is recommended that through continuing education and workshops, practicing counselors should learn about topics that include general refugee and immigrant issues, such as acculturation and strategies for preventing discrimination. Counselors must actively advocate for social justice in their communities and places of employment. Multiculturalism and social justice should be a salient topic in every counselor's professional development (Stadler, Suh, Cobia, Middleton, & Carney, 2006; Midgette & Meggert, 1991).

Guest speakers with refugee or immigrant backgrounds could help future counselors gain new perspectives about the experiences of resettlement and adaptation. Participants in this study were pleasantly surprised when they encountered individuals who knew facts about the former Yugoslavia or were familiar with some of the names of the new countries that were established. To increase familiarity with issues around the world, international student and community organizations could be used to gain access to guest speakers. Individuals with multicultural backgrounds can promote cross-cultural understanding, new perspectives and interactions based on mutual trust and understanding.

Counselors also can help by assisting refugees with accurate information about services available to them. Participants in this study often depended on aid organizations to provide them with information about accessible services in their new community. With their knowledge of community resources, counselors can provide referrals that help refugees navigate unfamiliar and complicated systems, including information about immigration policies, such as reunification or asylum-seeking requirements (Keel & Drew, 2004).

Mental health professionals who are meeting the needs of displaced people must have the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively work with them. This is a challenge because refugees have specific mental health problems which are often inadequately understood by professionals who work with them (Silove, 2004). Given that the refugee crisis continues to be a worldwide problem (Murthy & Lakshminarayana, 2006), it is important for counselors to increase their understanding of pre- and post-migration issues, which can help them work more effectively with refugees. Roysircar (2004) explained: "Understanding the statements of clients and placing their life events in their trauma contexts enable the therapist to begin to appreciate the worldview of clients rather than making harsh judgments about them" (p. 173).

This research study provided several directions for treatment conceptualization and is further organized into (a) relationship building, (b) culturally appropriate trauma interventions, (c) advocacy-service connections and (d) strength finding.

Relationship building. Building relationships is an important implication of this study—specifically, building relationships with counselors, cultural community members and individuals from the host culture (Birman & Tran, 2008; Weine, 2011). The participants in this study did not utilize any counseling services and indicated that they were not familiar with the counseling profession or services that were available in their communities. In clinical practice, it is recommended that counselors utilize person-centered approaches to explore the client's story and establish a strong therapeutic relationship to enhance trust and understanding. An

understanding of cultural kinship could be an important first step in providing help (Keel & Drew, 2004). The results of this study indicated that fostering cultural connections may bring out natural strengths and support in the refugee community.

Culturally appropriate trauma interventions. As counselors encounter refugees who have lived through war trauma, they will need to provide the necessary interventions to facilitate change. Interventions such as finding meaning, fulfillment and purpose may be used to address the losses endured and improve the mental health conditions of refugees in the new environment (Miller, Worthington, et al., 2002). It is suggested that treatment goals not avoid physical, psychological and emotional loss topics, but address those influences directly.

Advocacy-service connections. In order to enhance mental health services that are accessible to everyone, counselors can take an active leadership role in promoting available services. Counselors can develop multilingual pamphlets explaining the counseling process, and conduct brief community outreach presentations, workshops and psychoeducational groups. However, counselors should not assume that war trauma necessarily results in mental health problems (Miller & Rasco, 2004); refugees in this study wanted to be in charge of their lives and pursue their own goals and ambitions. Counselors can organize and implement volunteer programs in communities so that soon after arrival to the United States, refugees can access volunteers' skills and knowledge. School counselors can be helpful in providing information to refugees about the United States education system, building networks and finding information about further educational opportunities.

Finding strength. Several participants talked about discovering strength and ingenuity that they did not know they possessed. As a result, several participants felt much stronger and had a sense that they could handle anything that came their way. Participants demonstrated resilience to stress and became active agents in determining their future. Based on the responses in this study, it is recommended that counselors acknowledge refugee strengths in meeting adversity. Counselors can do this by reinforcing a sense of normalcy in their clients' current lives, embracing their sense of hope and safety, and recognizing their rich ethnic history and the complexity of their experiences. Some participants indicated that they were living productive and fulfilling lives despite the trauma they lived through.

Conclusions

This study demonstrated the depth of the trauma experiences that the 10 participants suffered in their homeland, which is consistent with previous literature that has focused on refugees from the former Yugoslavia and from other regions. The first set of stressors they experienced in their native country was compounded by a second set of stressors in their adaptation to the United States. The participants faced many difficulties in their adjustment to United States society and utilized a variety of strategies to overcome these hardships.

In conclusion, mental health services should be part of the resettlement support that refugees receive immediately upon arrival in the United States. The findings of this study indicated that the mental health needs of this population were unmet. It is imperative that counselor education programs provide students with training in refugee issues. Practitioners need training in culturally sensitive approaches that will enable them to provide culturally sensitive interventions with this very specific population. It is hoped that such therapeutic services will allow refugees to live a life free of fear, anxiety and post-traumatic stress. After enduring traumatic experiences in their homeland, these refugees can move forward in their future as productive American citizens and permanent residents.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. As we begin our conversation about your experiences, what would be helpful for me to know about you?
2. Could you tell me about your life in Yugoslavia before the war?
3. How were you and your family affected by the war?
4. What were your experiences during the war?
5. What do you remember as being the most difficult during that time?
6. Please describe your journey to the United States.
7. Describe some of your earliest experiences when you first arrived in the United States.
8. How prepared were you to deal with resettlement in the United States?
9. What helped you in the resettlement process?
10. What is life like for you now?
11. How has this experience changed you?
12. How have your attitudes and values changed in the adaptation process?
13. What has surprised you about how you have coped with resettlement?
14. What has been helpful and what has been difficult while living in America?
15. What have you learned about yourself during these years?

Career Development of Women in Academia: Traversing the Leaky Pipeline



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Women’s experiences in academia are laden with a fundamental set of issues pertaining to gender inequalities. A model reflecting women’s career development and experiences around their academic pipeline (or career in academia) is presented. This model further conveys a new perspective on the experiences of women academicians before, during and after their faculty appointments and can help in career counseling. Specifically, this model provides career counselors with a framework to conceptualize the concerns of women clients who work in academic environments. Other implications for career counseling as well as limitations and future directions also are discussed.

Keywords: women, academia, career development, pipeline, career counseling

There is a documented trend of women prematurely leaving higher education and academia. In a groundbreaking contribution spearheaded by women academicians, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) *Special Edition Newsletter* reported on the experiences of women faculty, stating that “the pipeline leaks at every stage of career” (MIT, 1999, p. 8). *Pipeline* refers to careers in academia, which often require many years of education and training prior to entry to the pipeline. More recent work has supported and deepened this assertion with empirical investigation (e.g., Goulden, Mason, & Frasch, 2011; Wang & Degol, 2013). Researchers have approached the question of *why* this is the case from a myriad of research perspectives, including sociological, psychological and cultural. The existing body of literature investigating women’s experiences as academicians addresses the issue of women’s struggle for equality in the institution, but does not comprehensively address how female faculty develop their career aspirations and expectations, how the essential component of career development influences their experiences within the pipeline, and how counselors and institutions might address women’s career outcomes.

In this article, the authors first discuss the process of scholarly questioning, which guided the authors’ choice to examine certain bodies of literature that seemed relevant to women in academia. Second, a brief literature review identifies different variables that influence how women choose careers as academicians, how they decide whether to stay in those careers and how institutions have been called to respond to women’s experiences. Next, the authors present a model combining issues relevant to women in academia from the perspectives of several bodies of scholarly literature (i.e., sociology, women’s studies, psychology). The authors also make predictions based on the model, and address limitations and implications for counselors.

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The idea for this article originated from a limited review of literature that addressed women as a cultural minority in a career field. Upon reviewing articles that centered on women in academia, the present authors observed that the vocational, cultural, social and psychological variables investigated in these studies focused substantially on women's present experiences in academia—a realm often referred to as *the pipeline*. The present authors wondered how women's life experiences before and after their faculty appointments influence their pipeline experiences.

The idea for the proposed model grew out of the literature review process itself. Through examining the available research on the subject of women in academia, it became clear that there were a multitude of perspectives on how and why women's experiences exist as they do in the academic world. However, it also was apparent that these perspectives were not linked systematically to the overall literature. The primary goal of creating this model was to better understand and organize constructs that explain *how* women's experiences before their career in academia, as well as how women experience that career. By organizing and linking these ideas into a model, the authors offer professional counselors a working model to refer to when helping academicians with career issues.

Method

The authors utilized a qualitative research methodology in which they combined largely quantitative data with a qualitative analysis called *grounded theory*. According to Tesch (1990), grounded theory involves the “identifying and categorizing of elements and explanation of their connections” (p. 63), wherein one sorts the data into categories, compares their content, “defines properties of the categories” and then “relates categories to each other” (p. 64). The present authors modified their grounded theory approach by using published literature comprised mostly of quantitative studies as their data. As stated in the rationale for this paper in the previous section, the authors wanted to understand *how* women's experiences leading up to and resulting in a career in academia, as well as how women experience that academic career. As is typical in qualitative research, these general questions served as their guide, and led to a generative process by which they surveyed the relevant literature of career development and gender as well as women's academic careers. More precisely, the authors conducted the initial explorations of the literature using the key search terms *women*, *academia* or *academe*, *faculty* or *professors*, *career development*, and *pipeline* in various combinations to yield the largest body of results. The review process consisted of eliminating all articles concerning the academic experiences of women outside the United States, as this paper focuses exclusively on women within U.S. institutions. Throughout this process, the authors met weekly for at least 4 months and, beyond that, met 1–2 times a month for a minimum of 1 year. Also, two graduate student researchers made the initial classifications and the faculty subject matter expert reviewed those classifications, checking for consistency and accuracy.

The authors began by engaging in the strategy of inquiry called grounded theory. When reading through the collected literature, they noticed patterns in which variables (and later, themes) tended to appear again and again. Thus, the first major critical themes emerged through an inductive process, reflecting the grounded theory methods first championed by Glaser (Kelle, 2005). Glaser's work focused on identifying similar codes whose content is gathered and organized into larger groups or concepts, and these groups or concepts form themes or categories (Kelle, 2005). Utilizing this approach in their exploration, the authors separated the articles into three groups based on their relevance to women across the career life span: early career development (preacademic appointment, which included experiences up to graduate school when some graduate students start participating in faculty and faculty-like roles), the pipeline (graduate school through academic job/career) and postpipeline (e.g., transitioning to a different career, retirement). It seemed important that these ideas present throughout the literature become more connected, and thus the present authors decided to create a model to show how person

and environment interact to mold women's expectations and experiences regarding education and career in academia. From this point forward, they carefully recorded the theoretical constructs and variables investigated by each research article and entered them into a spreadsheet. Once this process was complete, they critically reviewed the list of variables and constructs and collapsed some categories within each section together in order to capture both the broadest and the most succinct picture of the variables within the literature. Through this process, the authors were able to isolate the variables that were addressed by multiple articles (generally four or more), and these variables became the basis for the model.

Finally, the authors found that the variables tended to cluster together logically in each section. Through dialogue, critical thinking and specific knowledge within the field of vocational psychology, the authors categorized the variables into groups based on their similarity to and difference from one another, and created themes for the groups of variables within each section. These labels served to organize the variables into manageable concepts and tie the model together. In addition, these themes separated the larger social, psychological and systemic processes in ways that reflect how these concepts function for women in the world.

This literature review of over 120 articles revealed that, to the authors' knowledge, no existing model binds career development and outcomes to the concepts of women's career development and the leaky pipeline. Given the magnitude of such a project, the authors felt that it was best to create the model based on the research and resources that already exist in each area of scholarly inquiry. The variables and themes that exist in their model reflect their interpretation of the literature as well as their conceptualization of how these constructs interact with one another.

Variables Underlying Women Academicians' Career Processes

Previous researchers have identified many variables related to women academicians' career processes before, during and after their decision to pursue an academic job. The current authors reviewed and organized these variables by superordinate labels into the following three categories: career development, pipeline influences and pipeline outcomes.

Part I: Career Development

Excellent reviews of the literature on women's general career development have been published (e.g., Betz, 2005; Fitzgerald, Fassinger, & Betz, 1995; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). The current authors described variables important to women's career development while they avoided recreating what others have already explored. Continuing with their modified grounded theory approach detailed above, for organizational purposes, the authors created five categories of variables and gave each category a superordinate label. The categories are cognitive, coping, environmental, personality and relational.

Cognitive theme. These variables were considered to be cognitive in nature: career aspirations, career choice, career expectations, intellectual abilities and liberal gender role attitudes.

Career aspirations. Career aspirations, or one's dreams for one's career, are important in career development and choice (Astin, 1984; Farmer, 1985; Gottfredson, 1981). Women's career aspirations are affected by verbal ability, support from teachers, race, age and social class (Farmer, 1985); a desire for work–family balance and an intrinsic valuing of occupations (Frome, Alfeld, Eccles, & Barber, 2006); and parental influence (Li & Kerpelman, 2007).

Career choice. Fitzgerald et al. (1995) addressed career choice by considering how it can be limited as a result of being female, pointing out how stereotyping of occupations and women's compromised career aspirations work to limit women's career choices.

Career expectations. Brooks and Betz (1990) demonstrated that college student expectations for success in pursuing a job path, obtaining a job and advancing in that work, as well as preferences for a given type of work, explained 12%–41% of the variance in choosing a job. Men tended to have higher levels of expectations for more traditionally male occupations, whereas women tended to exhibit higher levels for more traditionally female occupations.

Intellectual abilities. Women's career development can be promoted with higher verbal and math abilities (Fassinger, 1990; O'Brien & Fassinger, 1993). Ceci, Williams, and Barnett (2009) found that women with high math abilities were more likely than men to also have high verbal abilities, resulting in a greater range of career choices.

Liberal gender role attitudes. Fassinger (1990) and O'Brien and Fassinger (1993) found that having more liberal attitudes toward one's gender role regarding one's roles in the family and in the workforce was related to and predictive of career choice. Flores and O'Brien (2002) found that liberal gender role attitudes were predictive of Mexican American adolescent women's self-efficacy for nontraditional careers. Liberal gender role attitudes can increase women's perceived career options, leading them to consider both traditional and nontraditional gender career choices.

Coping theme. The following variables involve coping: career decision-making coping, career maturity and adaptability, career self-efficacy, and self-esteem.

Career decision-making coping. Career decision-making coping can be defined as one's perceived confidence (self-efficacy) and/or coping skills when making career decisions. O'Hare and Beutell (1987) examined gender differences in career decision-making coping with undergraduate college students. Men had significantly higher scores than women on career decision-making self-efficacy behavior, or "a constructive, positive sense of control over the decision" (O'Hare & Beutell, 1987, p. 177). However, women scored significantly higher on reactive behavior, wanting "to be superorganized and do all that is expected," as well as support-seeking behavior (p. 177). Men tended to be more confident, likely because they are socialized to appear strong and confident to others. On the other hand, women tended to place importance on maintaining a relational style and reacting to situations as opposed to being proactive. Also, Betz, Hammond, and Multon (2005) found that career decision-making self-efficacy was negatively related to career indecision and positively related to career identity.

Career maturity and adaptability. Career maturity means making good career decisions during adolescence (Super, 1977). King (1989) showed that career maturity determinants can differ by gender: for girls, family cohesion, locus of control, age and cultural participation were most important; however, for boys, age, locus of control, family cohesion and parental aspirations mattered more. Career adaptability is a postadolescence extension of career maturity, and has been linked with career self-efficacy, career interests and problem-solving ability (Rottinghaus, Day, & Borgen, 2005).

Career self-efficacy. Believing in one's ability to perform career behaviors has been found to predict the number of career options considered (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Hackett, 1985), and is related to ($r = .59$) and predictive of career interests (Rottinghaus, Larson, & Borgen, 2003). Lower career self-efficacy beliefs predict

women's more traditional career choices (Hackett & Betz, 1981), while higher career self-efficacy beliefs predict career achievement (Betz, 2005).

Self-esteem. Self-esteem affects career development and achievement, and “increases occupational prestige . . . and income” (Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Piccolo, 2008, p. 204). Self-esteem aids in persistence when one is confronted with career barriers (Richie et al., 1997).

Environmental theme. This group impacts one's environment and includes the following: availability of resources and opportunities, low status of traditionally female jobs, previous work experience, social class and socioeconomic status, and socialization influences.

Availability of resources and opportunities. Astin's (1984) career choice model describes major concepts affecting women's careers: work motivation, with the driving needs of survival, pleasure and contribution; gender role socialization; and structure of opportunity, which includes elements such as job availability, barriers to work opportunities and economic considerations. Astin suggested that differences in gender socialization produce different work expectations, ultimately limiting women's career opportunities by what is seen as appropriate women's work. However, some opportunities provide women with a greater range of work–family alternatives (e.g., reproductive technologies).

Low status of traditionally female jobs. So-called *women's work* has been devalued in terms of status and equitable pay. In paid work, there is a well-documented gap between women's and men's wages (e.g., Bielby & Bielby, 1992; Corbett & Hill, 2012). A number of authors have formed postulations about the low status of traditionally female jobs and career processes (e.g., England, 2010; Fassinger, 1990; O'Brien & Fassinger, 1993). For example, in order for women to advance socioculturally (e.g., economically), they must consider work in male-dominated fields, such as academia; higher status jobs in U.S. culture are jobs traditionally held by men (England, 2010).

Previous work experience. Previous work experience during adolescence is predictive of career aspirations and career choice (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987).

Social class and socioeconomic status. Social class can shape career aspirations (Farmer, 1985). For example, social class privilege for European American adolescent women served to increase their perceptions of having many career options, as well as narrow the range of options they considered (Lapour & Heppner, 2009).

Socialization influences. Exposure to environmental learning, or socialization, can shape an individual's career processes. For instance, Gottfredson's (1981) model of circumscription and compromise in career development describes how one's environment and heredity impact his or her career. Leung, Ivey, and Suzuki (1994) found Asian American women more likely than European American women to consider nontraditional gender role careers in order to pursue higher prestige occupations—that is, prestige was most important to these women, as opposed to compromising based on gender role fit or perceived gender typing of certain jobs. For example, an Asian American woman might choose a career in engineering over a career in teaching, as the engineering career would have greater prestige but would be a less traditional career for women than teaching.

Personality theme. Personality variables include achievement motivation, career interests, instrumentality and other personality variables, and valuing graduate education.

Achievement motivation. Achievement motivation refers to the impetus toward seeking career attainments and accomplishments. Two major models of women's career development address achievement. In explaining

gender differences in achievement by focusing on women's decision making, Eccles (1987) proposed that the decisions women make regarding the work–family balance may be based on the subjective valuing of tasks as per socialization and stereotypes. Eccles suggested that some women may choose to focus more on family than work because other work is less satisfying to them than nurturing a family. In a different, empirically supported model, Farmer (1985) considered achievement motivation in career development to be influenced by cultural, personality and environmental factors. Achievement motivation culminates in the creation of career aspirations, motivation to pursue mastery experiences, and commitment to a career (Farmer, 1985).

Career interests. Women are more likely to have higher career interest scores for artistic and social domains and lower scores for realistic and investigative domains, when compared with men (Betz, 2005; Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Additionally, Evans and Diekman (2009) investigated how the presence of gendered beliefs about careers predicted differences in career goals and career interests along traditional gender lines. Women and men who thought about careers in a gender-stereotypical manner were less likely to endorse career interests in gender-atypical fields (Evans & Diekman, 2009).

Instrumentality and other personality variables. Instrumentality, which is defined as the ability to make decisions with confidence, was examined by O'Brien and Fassinger (1993) in their test of the Fassinger (1990) career model. The authors concluded that “young women who possess liberal gender role attitudes, are instrumental and efficacious with regard to math and careers, and exhibit moderate degrees of attachment and independence from their mothers tend to value their career pursuits” (O'Brien & Fassinger, 1993, p. 466).

Valuing graduate education. Battle and Wigfield (2002) found that college women with a strong career orientation had more positive views of graduate education, evidencing that the perceived usefulness of attending graduate school, a sense of attainment, and intrinsic motivation to pursue graduate studies were major reasons behind women's graduate school plans.

Relational theme. The following variables have a central relationship component: dual roles of marital and parental status, perceived encouragement, psychosocial needs, relationships with parents and presence of role models, and rewards and costs of career and parenthood.

Dual roles of marital and parental status. As Fassinger (1990) pointed out, past research has supported a negative relationship between being both a wife and mother and developing one's career. However, having liberal gender role attitudes helps women engage more fully in their own career development as opposed to more traditional attitudes (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Fassinger, 1990; Flores & O'Brien, 2002). Morrison, Rudd, and Nerad (2011) found that parenting young children was a barrier at all levels of the pipeline for women, and that married men advanced faster through the tenure process than married women.

Perceived encouragement. Parents, role models, teachers and supportive others may offer women perceived encouragement regarding their career options (e.g., Fassinger, 1990; Leslie, 1986), ultimately facilitating women's choice and attainment of both traditional and nontraditional careers (e.g., Hackett, Esposito, & O'Halloran, 1989). Perceived encouragement is especially important for the educational expectations and work identity of African American and Mexican American college students (Fisher & Padmawidjaja, 1999).

Psychosocial needs. Although psychosocial needs may be individually defined, women share needs for survival, satisfaction and pleasure (see Eccles, 1987; Farmer, 1985). Work can provide important sources of satisfaction and pleasure as well as meet survival needs, and underutilization of abilities has been associated with lower levels of mental health (Betz, 2005).

Relationships with parents and presence of role models. For college women, the positive influence of female teachers and high performance self-esteem (i.e., agency, or a feeling of being able to be autonomous) was most predictive of career salience (i.e., the importance of one's career relative to one's other roles) and educational aspirations (i.e., aspirations to pursue different levels of education). Also, having the positive influences of fathers and male teachers, as well as high performance self-esteem, predicted women wanting to pursue less traditional careers (Hackett et al., 1989).

Rewards and costs of career and parenthood. Leslie (1986) found that the daughters of homemakers had more positive feelings toward employment when mothers were not satisfied with homemaking and the children helped more with housework. Daughters of employed mothers viewed employment more positively when they perceived their mothers as happy and busy with their work. Daughters of homemakers indicated most concern with the costs of work and the costs of having children in the future, whereas the daughters of employed mothers also were concerned with the rewards of work. Also, Campione (2008) found that depression stemmed from family issues (e.g., caring for a disabled family member) and work issues (e.g., working irregular hours at a job), and working shifts during odd hours was associated with marital stress and family difficulties.

Conclusion of Part I: Career Development. In Part I, the current authors reviewed evidence on variables pertinent to a woman developing her career as an academician, or having access to developing a job or career as an academician. The next section focuses on the pipeline.

Part II: Pipeline Influences

The present authors conceptualize the pipeline, or the route to an academic career and the academic career itself, as beginning in graduate school and extending through all stages of a career in academia. The career development literature focuses heavily on undergraduates, whose experiences the present authors consider to be separate from graduate student experiences, which are conceptually more proximal to and overlap with the concerns of academic careers. Thus, for the authors' purposes, once a woman decides to pursue a graduate-level degree, her experiences are characterized as part of the pipeline. Again, the authors have grouped variables using superordinate labels. The themes include academic duties, academic environment, individually centered, resources and social variables.

Academic duties theme. In this section the authors describe variables associated with women's status within the academic institution, including administrative-level representation, institutional housekeeping and service-oriented activities, teaching and research productivity, and tenure-track versus nontenure-track status.

Administrative-level representation. Quite simply, women are not represented at the administrative level of academic institutions as frequently as men (Kimball, Watson, Canning, & Brady, 2001). Women's underrepresentation can be associated with the amount of effort they have invested in teaching, mentoring and service, along with an inability to decline projects, which may compromise women's career trajectory toward higher levels of authority within the institution. Kimball et al. (2001) suggested that women may not understand how to effectively negotiate the male-dominated and hierarchical structure of academia in order to fulfill broader career advancement desires.

Institutional housekeeping and service-oriented activities. Bird, Litt, and Wang (2004) defined *institutional housekeeping* as "the invisible and supportive labor of women to improve women's situation within the institution" (p. 195), based on Valian's (1998) work. Valian (2005) described these activities as "low-visibility, low-power, low-reward, and labor-intensive" (p. 205). Women may often be called upon to participate on committees or in groups that bolster the department or institution with regard to advising and teaching, or even issues pertinent to women in the academy. Providing service work may detract from time performing

research, which is often the most heavily weighted criterion for tenure decisions (Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2011). On the other hand, service activities are recently gaining more recognition as an important component of tenure decisions (Sampson, Driscoll, Foulk, & Carroll, 2010).

Teaching and research productivity. Data gathered for the MIT (1999) report on women faculty members revealed “inequitable distributions” regarding “teaching assignments” (p. 8). Women, by cultural standard, bear the weight of the more relational processes involved in academia (e.g., teaching, advising, mentoring), so research and administration are areas still disproportionately male dominated. A more recent study of university deans focused on what was considered important in achieving tenure, and supported the salience of research productivity above other faculty contributions such as service and, to some extent, teaching (Balogun, Sloan, & Germain, 2007). Furthermore, “heavy teaching workloads may be detrimental to the chances of obtaining tenure” (Balogun, Sloan, & Germain, 2006, p. 532).

Tenure track versus nontenure track. Harper, Baldwin, Gansneder, and Chronister (2001) found stark differences between men and women faculty members in both the tenure-track and nontenure-track categories. Generally, they found that men spent the fewest number of hours teaching, with more time spent on administrative, research and other activities, while women in all categories spent a slightly larger percentage of their time teaching. Differences also were found between the tenure-track categories and the relative amounts of time spent teaching undergraduate courses, with nontenure-track faculty spending a majority of their time teaching undergraduate courses versus tenure-track faculty who are teaching graduate courses more (Harper et al., 2001). Generally speaking, women make up a much larger percentage of nontenure-track faculty (e.g., August & Waltman, 2004; Equal Rights Advocates [ERA], 2003). Often the issue of tenure is complicated for women due to role conflict related to childcare and its incompatibility with the demands of the tenure process (Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006; O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005; Stinchfield & Trepal, 2010). In addition, there are other complex processes that influence women’s ability to gain tenure, an overview of which is outside the scope of this article (see American Association of University Women [AAUW], 2004; Marchant, Bhattacharya, & Carnes, 2007; Park, 2007; Rudd, Morrison, Sadrozinski, Nerad, & Cerny, 2008).

Academic environment theme. This theme focuses on variables that pertain to the college or university environment, and the literature is reviewed regarding departmental climate, isolation and invisibility, and transparency of departmental decision making (including tenure).

Departmental climate. Various authors have described departmental climates within institutions as “hostile” (ERA, 2003, p. 3), “challenging and chilly” (August & Waltman, 2004, p. 179), and “toxic” (Hill, Leinbaugh, Bradley, & Hazler, 2005, p. 377). These authors also pointed out how the lack of a supportive departmental climate contributes to other issues women face as academicians, such as having less access to resources or feeling isolated.

Isolation and invisibility. Winkler (2000) asserted that women faculty themselves define the limits of their productivity (which tends to be the largest factor in salary increase and tenure decisions) based on “feelings of exclusion, disconnectedness, marginalization, intellectual and social isolation, and limited access to resources” (p. 740). She also argued that women more than men tend to have more rigid and higher standards for quality over quantity in research, and that women may be more perfectionistic in research activities, which leads to a lower overall rate of publication.

Transparency of departmental decision making (including tenure). August and Waltman (2004) investigated job satisfaction of faculty members and found that women at different levels of the tenure process were influenced by different job satisfaction criteria. All faculty women surveyed reported being impacted by

the following: having a supportive relationship with the head or chair of the department, having a perceived ability to influence decisions made within their department and receiving an equitable salary as compared to others within the department. Tenured women rated the equitable salary and departmental influence variables as more significant. For nontenured women, level of influence was also significant.

Individually centered theme. These psychosociocultural variables pertain to women as individuals, and include academic self-concept, age, and race and ethnicity, as well as gender schemas and feminism, and personal power and self-promoting behavior.

Academic self-concept. Guidelines for mentorship posed by Williams-Nickelson (2009) include specific action components aimed at bolstering a woman graduate student's academic self-concept, or an individual's conception of herself as a student. Mentors should "facilitate independent thinking" and encourage mentees to "develop self-assurance," "be mentored" and "be receptive to autonomy and divergence" (Williams-Nickelson, 2009, p. 289). Ülkü-Steiner, Kurtz-Costes, and Kinlaw (2000) found that women's academic self-concept and mentor support (regardless of the mentor's gender) in graduate programs best predicted women graduate students' career commitment. In addition, women and men who were attending graduate school in a male-dominated department reported lower levels of academic self-concept than those in more gender-balanced programs (Ülkü-Steiner et al., 2000).

Age. For women entering the academy 20 or more years ago, being an older student (after having children or supporting a partner through his or her career) could be a barrier to entrance into graduate school; some women, however, reported positive effects of being leaders and mentors as older graduate students (Bronstein, 2001). In addition, women reported feeling marginalized, being overlooked, being seen as a *mom*, and being overtly discriminated against in academia (Bronstein, 2001). Junior and senior women faculty also may experience rifts with one another based on different feelings about discrimination and inclusion (MIT, 1999). Furthermore, Jacobs and Winslow (2004) compiled data on faculty ages, tenure track, tenure status and job satisfaction, and found that the high-end child-bearing years for women (late 30s through early 40s) are spent working toward tenure, which complicates the work–family balance.

Race and Ethnicity. There has been "no growth in the percentage of minority students receiving doctoral degrees since 1999" (Maton, Kohout, Wicherski, Leary, & Vinokurov, 2006, p. 126). Women of color are at a disadvantage before the pipeline even begins, a problem that persists through the academic career level, where they may experience marginalization, discrimination and microaggressions (Marbley, Wong, Santos-Hatchett, Pratt, & Jaddo, 2011). Thomas, Mack, Williams, and Perkins (1999) studied the effects of personal fulfillment (or an individual's sense of meaning and/or satisfaction in life) on the research agendas of academicians who are women of color. Often, women of color who assume an *outsider within* stance (a professional orientation toward using one's personal experiences and interests to fuel one's research) may be disadvantaged for scholarly recognition and promotion, though researching topics of personal multicultural concern can increase one's level of personal fulfillment (Thomas et al., 1999).

Gender schemas and feminism. Gender schemas exist that work against women in male-dominated professional environments (Valian, 2005). Lynch (2008) touched on clashing life roles for women in the early pipeline. One recurring theme for the participants was women graduate students' feeling that they had traded off their feminist ideals and independence by getting married and/or having children, and by being financially dependent on their husbands during their time in graduate school. Krefting (2003) discussed ambivalent sexism, which essentially contrasts the concepts of having "perceived competence" (i.e., masculine) and being "likeable" (i.e., feminine; p. 269). The intersection of these two concepts for women in competitive academic

environments can be a conundrum: How does a woman garner respect for her competence when likability is the trait with which students and colleagues are most concerned?

Personal power and self-promoting behavior. Kimball et al. (2001) posited that previous research has shown that women place more emphasis on “external attributions” than men (p. 136). That is, although men and women both believe that internal attributes such as intelligence and ambition contribute to one’s career success in academia, women place much greater weight on their social capital—for instance, the people they know and the prestige of their educating institution. These authors also discussed the fact that many women feel uncomfortable with the self-promoting behavior that may facilitate advancement in academia.

Resources theme. This theme includes variables related to resources within institutions that impact women’s career paths as academicians, including access to resources; financial issues; and salary, rewards, and recognition.

Access to resources. Krefting (2003) conceptualized women’s access to resources as an uphill climb. Whereas men are included in the network of those expected to succeed within academia, women are fighting for both inclusion and the resources to make them worthy of inclusion. Winkler (2000) also echoed Krefting’s (2003) notion that resources (and subsequently, productivity) flow from being included in “the networks in which ideas are generated and evaluated, in which human and material resources circulate, and in which advantages are exchanged” (2000, p. 740). MIT’s (1999) seminal report on women’s experiences as academics in its own School of Science uncovered “inequitable distributions . . . involving space, amount of 9-month salary paid from individual research grants, teaching assignments, awards and distinctions, inclusion on important committees and assignments within the department” (p. 7).

Financial issues. Students in psychology doctoral programs tend to graduate with student loan amounts that exceed \$75,000 (Williams-Nickelson, 2009). Springer, Parker, & Leviten-Reid (2009) discussed a multitude of stressors for graduate student parents, including lack of financial support, a struggle to afford childcare and FMLA leave issues. Lynch (2008) reported that the most common complaint of women graduate student mothers is a lack of financial support from their academic departments.

Salary, rewards and recognition. August and Waltman’s (2004) survey uncovered that tenured women faculty’s career satisfaction was heavily influenced by their “salary comparable to similar peers” (p. 188). Harper et al. (2001) conducted a cross-discipline analysis of men’s and women’s experiences in academia and reported that “overall, men’s salaries appear to be more related to their disciplines and responsibilities while women’s salaries are more related to their tenure status and the degree they hold” (p. 248). In addition, Harper et al. (2001) noted that women tend to earn less because they are often employed in academic positions that pay less (e.g., nontenure track, assistant professor).

Social theme. This theme subsumes the influence of family, work and peer relationship variables, including peer and mentor relationships; presence of women in the field and the decision to pursue a doctorate; and work and family issues such as parenthood, marriage and the division of responsibility.

Peer and mentor relationships. Several articles review or note the positive impact of supportive peer relationships on female graduate student success (Lynch, 2008; Ülkü-Steiner et al., 2000; Williams-Nickelson, 2009). Also, mentoring and advising relationships provide essential resources to women graduate students, including elements such as emotional support and professional guidance (Williams-Nickelson, 2009). Hill et al. (2005) outlined the importance of supportive peers and social/teaching environments as a factor of satisfaction

in their study of women faculty members in counselor education. Also, Pruitt, Johnson, Catlin, and Knox (2010) found that women counseling psychology associate professors who were seeking promotion to full professor indicated that having the support of a current mentor was helpful. Compared to men, women typically place a higher value on a supportive work environment and may often find these types of relationships through service-oriented work in the institution (Bird et al., 2004; Kimball et al., 2001).

Presence of women in the field and the decision to pursue a doctorate. Women are more likely to leak from the educational pipeline before doctoral completion, and they still earn less than men in the world of work (Ülkü-Steiner et al., 2000; Winkler, 2000). Ülkü-Steiner et al. (2000) found that the mere presence of women faculty in any academic department bolstered career commitment and academic self-concept for men and women doctoral students. Similarly, Winkler (2000) reported that women academicians benefit from relationships with female students and that female students tend to graduate more quickly when female faculty are present within the department. However, because women tend to be underrepresented as faculty members in general, there is an overall shortage of role models for women wishing to pursue doctoral education and become academicians themselves (August & Waltman, 2004; Harper et al., 2001).

Work and family issues: Parenthood, marriage and division of responsibility. Springer et al. (2009) and Lynch (2008) discussed the unique role conflicts that occur early in the pipeline for women graduate students who also are mothers. These women often find themselves caught between their desire to excel in graduate school and to be a mother, and also experience challenges with respect to finding peer support from their non-mother peers.

Wolfinger, Mason, and Goulden (2008) conceptualized family and marriage as having a direct effect on the leaky pipeline when women are trying to earn tenure. Generally speaking, when family issues and domestic responsibilities are at stake, women academics receive less support from their male partners than men academics do from their female partners (Bird et al., 2004). However, evidence for the effect that children and marriage have on scholarly productivity paints a different picture. Winkler (2000) reviewed the literature and found that though women on the whole publish less than men, single women are less productive in publication than married women. Krefling (2003) reported that “neither marriage nor parenthood seems to affect women’s productivity (or men’s, Valian, 1998)” (p. 264).

Conclusion of Part II: Pipeline Influences. This section discussed the themes and variables that are relevant to women’s experiences in the pipeline as graduate students and as academicians. The final section addresses key outcomes.

Part III: Pipeline Outcomes

The following section examines academic women’s career outcomes and satisfaction as well as institutional responses to women’s issues. The literature search for this section included the search terms *women’s career satisfaction*, *women in academia*, and *university (or college) response*.

Women’s career outcomes and satisfaction. As discussed previously, fewer women are granted tenure than their male counterparts. As one travels through the pipeline, chances of leaking out are greater for women at all stages of their career than for men (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Winkler, 2000; Wolfinger et al., 2008). In August and Waltman’s (2004) study, women’s career satisfaction was predicted by “departmental climate; the quality of student relationships and such related activities as mentoring and advising students . . . ; a supportive relationship with the unit chairperson; and the level of influence within the department or unit” (p. 187). In addition, for tenured women faculty, “comparable salary and the importance of departmental influence” rose to the forefront (p. 187). Harper et al. (2001) found that both tenured and tenure-track women were “least satisfied

with their authority to make other job decisions . . . and the time they have available to advise students. . . . Non-tenure-track women as a group were the least satisfied with their authority to decide which courses they teach” (p. 251).

Institutional response. The call for institutional change to address the needs of women academicians is a direct result of research conducted on this topic in the past several decades. Although a full review of institutional initiatives on behalf of changing women’s experiences in academia is beyond the scope of this article, the current authors have highlighted some recommendations for change that exist in the literature.

Many authors have called for higher education institutions to implement initiatives to address the issues that women academics face (e.g., AAUW, 2004; ERA, 2003; MIT, 1999; Stinchfield & Trepal, 2010). Generally speaking, these initiatives include, but are not limited to the following: (a) changing hiring practices to seek out women and people of color for all faculty positions, especially tenure-track positions; (b) encouraging mentorship programs for faculty; (c) instituting policies in which the tenure clock may be stopped and restarted; (d) adjusting views on career commitment to accommodate academicians’ family and other responsibilities; (e) promoting women to higher-level administrative positions; (f) eliminating gender discrimination regarding salary and access to resources; (g) revising the tenure review process to include merits for service-oriented work; (h) making evaluation standards for tenure clear and transparent; (i) expanding understanding of the psychosociocultural variables that influence academicians differently; (j) conducting research on institutional policy and its effects on faculty members; (k) being active beyond hiring practices by encouraging women and people of color to pursue careers as academicians; and (l) being vigilant of and punitive toward gender discrimination taking place within the institution (Bird et al., 2004; Bronstein, 2001; ERA, 2003; Harper et al., 2001; Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; MIT, 1999; Thomas et al., 1999; Valian, 2005; Winkler, 2000).

Conclusion of Part III: Pipeline Outcomes. This section provided an overview of career outcomes and satisfaction among women academicians and how institutions have been called to respond to these issues. The following section reviews the authors’ model for women’s career processes in academia.

A Model for the Career Process of Women in Academia

Women’s career development is related to a variety of psychological, social and cultural influences. Researchers have studied many of these influences with girls and women, demonstrating the powerful effects shaping women’s career aspirations, choices and development. In the present authors’ model, career development influences, pipeline influences (factors affecting entry into academia), and pipeline outcomes (outcomes of a career in academia) are addressed. Here, the authors explain the structure of and rationales behind each section of the model (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

Overview of the Model

To promote parsimony of the literature and model coherence, the authors organized women’s career development influences into five major groups of variables: cognitive, coping, environmental, personality and relational. Each of these major themes is present within the top portion of Figure 1. These five domains of career development lead up to a decision to pursue a graduate degree, labeled “pursue terminal degree” in the model. The authors used the phrase “terminal degree” for the sake of simplicity, even though some employers and fields do not require a doctorate (e.g., school psychology).

While previous collegiate accomplishments certainly facilitate matriculation into a graduate program, the authors consider the pipeline as beginning in graduate school and continuing with women taking academic

positions. The numerous variables affecting women’s experiences in academia are grouped into the following categories: academic duties, academic environments, individually centered, resources and social.

The pipeline is considered to be one piece, since the literature seemed to indicate this understanding and it resulted in the most parsimonious interpretation. However, future evidence may lead to consideration of the pipeline in two pieces, in which there is an early pipeline that focuses on graduate students and a midpipeline that pertains to women in academic positions. For example, some variables may not be relevant to graduate students (e.g., tenure-track versus nontenure-track), which lends support to the idea of breaking the pipeline into two groups. However, many variables have been found to be a consideration for both graduate students and academicians (e.g., age, work, family issues). Also, some variables that are currently considered part of one group may actually show evidence of salience with the other group (e.g., academic self-concept, financial issues). For now, since the themes seem interwoven with the experiences of both graduate students and academicians, the current authors have considered them together as one group.

Once a woman decides to pursue a graduate degree, a host of psychosociocultural factors begin to influence both her educational experiences and her experiences in academia. As the model shows, women may leak out of the pipeline at different points of their academic careers (i.e., early, mid- or late career), with early leaking meaning that one might never enter academe. The final section of the model indicates two major outcomes of women’s career development and the academic pipeline. First, women may report different levels of career satisfaction. Second, institutional responses to women’s issues within the academy may vary.

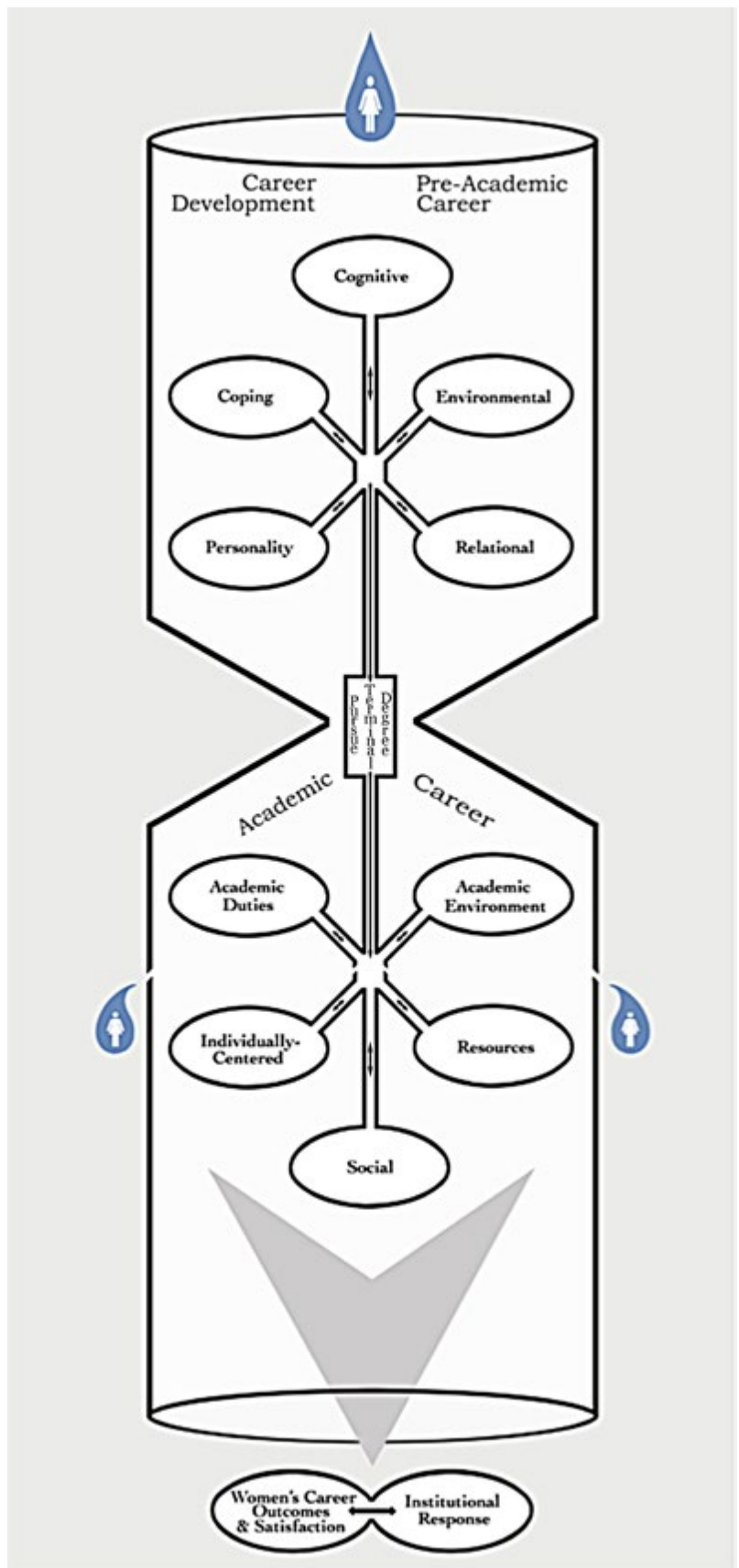


Figure 1. The Leaky Pipeline: Career Development of Women in Academia Before, During, and After Careers in Academia

Table 1*Themes and Variables Comprising the Career Development and Leaky Pipeline Experiences of Women in Academia*

Career Development	Pipeline Experiences
Cognitive theme	Academic duties theme
Career aspirations	Administrative-level representation
Career choice	Institutional housekeeping and service-oriented activities
Career expectations	Teaching and research productivity
Intellectual abilities	Tenure track versus nontenure track
Liberal gender role attitudes	Academic environment theme
Coping theme	Departmental climate
Career decision-making coping	Isolation and invisibility
Career maturity and adaptability	Transparency of departmental decision making (including tenure)
Career self-efficacy	Individually centered theme
Self-esteem	Academic self-concept
Environmental theme	Age
Availability of resources and opportunities	Race and ethnicity
Low status of traditionally female jobs	Gender schemas and feminism
Previous work experience	Personal power and self-promoting behavior
Social class and socioeconomic status	Resources theme
Socialization influences	Access to resources
Personality theme	Financial issues
Achievement motivation	Salary, rewards and recognition
Career interests	Social theme
Instrumentality and other personality variables	Peer and mentor relationships
Valuing graduate education	Presence of women in the field and the decision to pursue a doctorate
Relational theme	Work and family issues: Parenthood, marriage and division of responsibility
Dual roles of marital and parental status	
Perceived encouragement	
Psychosocial needs	
Relationships with parents and presence of role models	
Rewards and costs of career and parenthood	

Model Predictions

Based on the literature review and the resulting model, the authors can make several predictions to describe the processes involved in women entering, traversing and exiting the pipeline.

Entry into the Pipeline. As women begin their careers as faculty members they bring their career development history with them, which in turn influences their education and career. The interaction of these factors creates a unique experience for women in faculty positions. Specifically, the career development variables are relevant to entry into the pipeline. First, the authors predict that the cognitive theme affects career trajectory in that women must have career aspirations, career choices and career expectations that are compatible with an academic career, as well as sufficient intellectual abilities and liberal gender role attitudes to endure and succeed in graduate school and beyond. Second, the coping theme also facilitates pipeline entrance, as women must have career decision-making coping, career maturity and adaptability, career self-efficacy, and self-esteem to transition effectively from graduate school into academic careers. Third, the authors predict that lower social class and socioeconomic status diminish the likelihood that a woman will enter an academic career (environmental theme), because lower social class and socioeconomic status tend to be associated with less access to opportunity structures such as those afforded by the educational attainment required for many

academic careers. Fourth, the authors predict that having high achievement motivation, possessing career interests that complement an academic path, exhibiting high instrumentality and valuing graduate education facilitate an academic career (personality theme). Fifth, the authors hypothesize that the presence of perceived encouragement and supportive relationships with parents and role models facilitate these career paths (relational theme).

In addition, pipeline variables like feminism, personal power and self-promoting behavior have been evidenced as beneficial to women, and the present authors predict that these trends will likely remain consistent. For instance, academic self-concept can be a facilitative variable for women's futures as academicians when that self-concept is consistent with an academic career and when women attend graduate programs that are more gender balanced than male dominated.

Traversing and Exiting the Pipeline. Once a woman enters graduate school, she is officially in the pipeline, and must maintain a level of teaching and research productivity commensurate with the expectations of the institution. Women academicians may leak out of the pipeline if they are denied tenure due to a lack of research productivity as a result of spending a disproportionate amount of time performing unrecognized service-oriented activities, particularly in research-intensive institutions (Misra et al., 2011). However, there is some evidence that institutions are recognizing service activities more frequently (Sampson et al., 2010). The current authors predict that experiencing a hostile departmental climate, feeling isolated and invisible, and encountering little or no transparency in departmental decision making facilitate conditions that increase the likelihood of a woman leaking from the pipeline before, during and after tenure decisions are made.

In addition, the authors predict that women leave their academic careers behind due to feeling stuck in positions with little hope for meaningful promotion, having restricted access to resources, dealing with financial issues or feeling dissatisfied with their salaries, rewards or level of recognition. Posttenure, the authors predict that a lack of administrative-level representation leads some women to leave academia because they are not able to realize administrative-level career goals, or because they may have less support (e.g., lack of available mentors) and more career challenges (e.g., greater isolation and invisibility) within institutions that lack women in these positions.

Discussion

As the authors have shown through the model and its explanation, women academicians experience a unique set of personal and career challenges. Socialization and educational and career development processes stack the deck early, especially against women entering traditionally male-dominated fields. When one adds these processes to the existing structure of the academic system, it becomes clear that there are inherent systemic disadvantages for women in academic fields, which contribute to the leaks during each stage of the academic pipeline. The influences that women experience as children and young adults, and the discrepancies between women in different positions within academia, point to the necessity of a more holistic understanding of how women choose and navigate the complex path that leads them to and through academia.

It is the authors' contention that each section of the model builds the groundwork for the next stage of the model in such a way that women in later stages of their careers have a multiplicity of additive strains that inhibit their career and personal satisfaction. To be sure, there are women who feel happy and fulfilled in their academic careers. At the same time, the present authors believe that this picture of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is supported by achievements and growth that occurs in different ways and for different reasons than it does for men. The authors hope to understand these influences and encourage responses at individual, societal and

systemic levels. There exist numerous implications of this model, and here the authors highlight a few key points.

Implications

Barriers for women. Women receive opportunities in the work world in ways that constrain their choices from a young age (e.g., Gottfredson, 1981; Gottfredson & Lapan, 1997; Mello, 2008; Riegle-Crumb, Moore, & Ramos-Wada, 2011). Factors such as low self-efficacy, little perceived encouragement and few role models can create barriers for career choice. However, some women do pursue academic careers, succeeding in their efforts and finding the work enjoyable and satisfying. Identifying a combination of protective factors that help women to succeed in academia could help offset some of these barriers. Also, career and mental health counselors can help women to develop these strategies and traits for themselves.

Women seem to struggle throughout the lifespan with perfectionism that inhibits their ability to feel fulfilled by their endeavors as well as their ability to produce academic work at the same rates as their male peers. It may be that women decide to leave the pressure of the academic environment because they experience burnout, working tirelessly and too meticulously toward a goal that men may reach more easily since they may be less influenced by perfectionistic tendencies. It is the authors' hope that graduate training programs, mentors, counselors and academic institutions will continue to work together to provide women with guidance, support and psychoeducation in order to cultivate new perspectives on achievement in academia.

Gender role socialization. How women glean messages from the dominant U.S. culture regarding what types of jobs are suitable for women and gendered expectations for behavior influence and constrain young women's career interests, self-efficacy, view of parenthood and achievement motivation. Should a woman find herself with the resources necessary to enter graduate school with aspirations of an academic career, these socialization processes could potentially continue to restrain her because she may find herself with fewer female than male mentors and professors. If she has children, she also may find that the role strain between graduate student and mother is exhausting. If she is successful and becomes an academic, she may find herself balancing feelings of marginalization, isolation and frustration regarding her work and collegial relationships with the expectation that she be more "likeable" than "competent" (Krefting, 2003, p. 269). Often she may be called upon to perform activities in service of the institution that reinforce the gendered nature of "housework" for the institution (Valian, 2005, p. 205). Depending on the institution, performing service-oriented activities for the institution may help (Sampson et al., 2010) or hurt (Misra et al., 2011) her progress toward promotion and tenure. Hence, women may leak from the pipeline. For those women who do not leak, there are lingering discriminatory practices and beliefs that may flavor each day they spend pursuing their career goals and navigating the male-dominated terrain of the U.S. academic institution. The authors hope that this model will inspire others to consider the tangible reality of gender discrimination and combat its very specific effects on women academicians.

Role models and mentors. Women's experiences with role models in early life affect how these women aspire to and place importance upon career success (Hackett et al., 1989). In addition, girls' decisions about work and family are influenced in part by their perception of their mothers' work behavior, both inside and outside the home; by their emerging gender role attitudes; and by sociocultural messages regarding the gendered nature of careers and opportunities that exist. The work-family issue does not dissipate as women age, but is consistently present throughout women's lives in the pipeline. It seems logical to conclude that some women with doctoral degrees and families decide to leave the pipeline due to the strain that academic jobs place on them. Providing more modern and family-friendly practices within institutions, such as daycare services and paternity leave, might well encourage women to enter or remain in academia.

Limitations

One limitation to the model presented here pertains to its broad overview of some of the variables relevant to women's career development in academia and job satisfaction. The variables in this model are by no means the only contributing variables, and thus the authors welcome feedback, extensions and rearrangement of this model based on other scholarly bodies of knowledge and research findings.

Also, an important consideration for future researchers and scholars is the question of how best to represent the model itself, specifically regarding the academic pipeline. Two major issues that arose for the authors involved (a) the troublesome nature of conceptualizing women's academic career paths as linear in the form of this pipeline, and (b) whether to conceptualize women graduate students and women academicians as representing different phases of pipeline processes. With more study, conceptualization of these variables and how they fit together may lead to shifts in the current model. Finally, the authors' review has been limited in that a comprehensive survey of this voluminous literature was not possible given the realities of publication space limitations.

Implications for Counselors and Other Future Directions

The model has many potential applications for counselors. First, counselors can utilize the model to conceptualize women academicians' career development issues, using Figure 1 and Table 1 as quick reference tools. Also, counselors can assist women with career decision making and coping with their academic careers, which may help alleviate leaks in the pipeline. For example, expanding this model may help to guide the development of career counseling interventions for girls and young women during their career development and college or graduate school years. In addition, women academicians can benefit from interventions designed to explicate their experiences in a male-dominated career field, help them find support and challenge institutions for policy changes. In addition, the model can guide further research and interventions. Expanding, reframing or finding supportive or contradictory evidence for the model and its variables can be informative for academicians who conduct research in vocational psychology, women's issues or other areas, as this information can guide future research, theory, and clinical practice. Finally, career counselors can act as advocates working in partnership with academic institution administrators, who may benefit from this model by looking critically at their own practices and policies and working with departments and faculty members to address critical issues that influence women's decisions to pursue, remain in or leave academic careers.

Conclusion

The authors have merged and organized several bodies of literature regarding women in academia before, during and after their faculty appointments. Women's unique career development and socialization experiences are the foundation for understanding how women navigate careers in academia. Barriers do exist for women that constrain career development, yet resources such as counseling and mentoring can counteract these barriers. In addition to highlighting the obstacles within the leaky pipeline, the authors hope to encourage the adjustment and repair of the pipeline itself.

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Global Links and Gaps in Counselor Education Programs: Establishing a Baseline



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As the world grows more connected, the counseling profession has developed a significant focus on multicultural concerns and internationalization (the incorporation of international perspectives), but the extent of this phenomenon is currently unknown. The current pilot study established baseline data concerning how counselor education programs encouraged and supported international opportunities for students and faculty. Representatives from 62 of the 215 (as of spring 2011) programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs completed a survey describing their institutions' and departments' commitment to incorporating student and faculty international activities into their counselor preparation programs, and the nature of such activities in faculty involvement and counselor training. Two primary themes emerged from the data: (1) a disconnect between commitment to and execution of international activities, and (2) a one-sided approach to internationalization and cultural exchanges. Implications for research and counselor preparation are considered.

Keywords: internationalization, counselor preparation, cultural exchanges, baseline data, international activities

Heppner, Leong, and Chiao (2008), writing from the perspective of counseling psychology, observed that increased global dialogue and the incorporation of international perspectives has resulted in a shift toward viewing the counseling profession as part of a larger global movement. In the introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Counseling & Development* focused on counseling around the world, Hohenshil (2010) asserted that the growth of this movement is “one of the major and most exciting emerging trends in the counseling profession” (p. 3). The importance of this trend was underscored by Leung et al. (2009), who provided an extensive rationale for and discussion of internationalization in counseling. However, Leung et al. (2009), along with other authors, notably Pedersen (2003), Leong and Ponterotto (2003), and Heppner (2006), noted that internationalization is still a fresh concept and that understanding and implementing it is a work in progress.

Ng and Noonan (2012) asserted that internationalization is “a multidimensional movement in which professionals across nations collaborate through equal partnerships to advance the practice of counseling as a worldwide profession” (p.11). These collaborations will likely include many who identify as professional counselors, but must be inclusive so as to encourage contributions from those of other identities and traditions who promote mental health, wellness and development from different, though compatible, perspectives. In order to foster such collaborations, Leung et al. (2009) have advocated for “the nurturance of a global perspective in counseling scholarship, through our teaching, research, and service” (p. 112). Numerous authors have promoted such a perspective through articles that focus on the nature of counseling in various countries (e.g., Remley, Bacchini, & Krieg, 2010; See & Ng, 2010; Stockton, Nitza, & Bhusumane, 2010), those that explore counseling-oriented topics across borders (e.g., Chung, 2005; Furbish, 2007) and several that describe the

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challenges that international students face in Euro-American counseling training and supervision (e.g., Crockett & Hays, 2011; Yakunina, Weigold, & McCarthy, 2010).

The global aspects of counseling, teaching and service also are central to research that explains and analyzes the involvement of extended cultural immersion experiences in counselor education programs (e.g., Alexander, Kruzek, & Ponterotto, 2005; Canfield, Low, & Hovestadt, 2009; Ishii, Gilbride, & Stensrud, 2009; Shannonhouse & West-Olatunji, 2013; Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010). Throughout this cultural immersion literature, a primary emphasis is the use of cultural exchanges as an avenue toward increasing multicultural counseling competence. If it is true that international experiences promote multicultural counseling competence, as suggested by Alexander et al. (2005), Shannonhouse and West-Olatunji (2013) and Tomlinson-Clarke and Clarke (2010), inclusion of such experiences as part of counselor training seems important. Though Shannonhouse (2013) provided a current review of the literature regarding the relationship of cultural immersion to multicultural counseling competence, a solid understanding of the extent of international cultural immersion across programs is not currently available. Although several authors have described the nature and measure of international involvement among counseling psychology faculty and students (see Gerstein, Heppner, Ægisdóttir, Leung & Norsworthy, 2009), the literature lacks information concerning the involvement of counselor educators and counselor education programs with the international counseling community.

The present pilot study was undertaken to obtain baseline data on the amount of counselor preparation program involvement beyond U.S. borders. The authors' intent was to determine the extent to which counselor education programs incorporate (and are committed to) international and cultural immersion activities as part of faculty involvement and counselor training. The authors proposed the following research questions: How many counselor education programs have a departmental commitment to international activities? To what extent do faculty and students participate in international activities? What kinds of activities are included?

Method

Through a multi-step revision process, the authors drafted a survey to examine the nature of international activities in faculty involvement and counselor training. First, two counselor educators not involved with the study who had expertise in international activities reviewed an outline of the study design, research questions and draft survey questions. The authors then revised the survey per the feedback they received, and subsequently field-tested it with one counselor educator and two doctoral students with prior counseling experience outside the United States. Based upon their feedback, the draft survey underwent wording, content and structural changes, which resulted in the final instrument used in this study. The authors presented the final version of the survey to an Institutional Review Board and it received approval for use as intended.

Eight quantitative survey items assessed demographic characteristics of each respondent (e.g., gender, ethnicity) and his or her counselor education program (e.g., Association for Counselor Education and Supervision [ACES] region, program tracks). Twenty additional questions assessed the nature of international experiences for both faculty (Table 2) and students (Table 3), and the extent of program and institutional support (incorporated throughout Tables 2 and 3). Participants provided comments in relation to several questions to expand upon their initial responses.

The authors sent a link to the online Qualtrics survey along with information about the study via e-mail to the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) coordinators of all (as of spring 2011) 215 CACREP-accredited programs. The e-mail included a request to forward the link to another faculty member if the coordinator thought that person would be better suited to complete the survey. It is unknown how many program coordinators or other faculty completed the survey; however, 66 counselor

educators initiated responses, with 62 completing the full survey. While the initial response rate was 31%, the survey completion rate was 29%. The number of responses to individual items varied from 59–62. The sample size was insufficient to make valid within- and between-groups comparisons.

Participants and Program Information

The counselor educators who completed the survey included 24 males (41%) and 35 females (59%). Most were Caucasian ($n = 55$, 90%). Two were African American (3%), one each identified as Asian American or Latino (2%), and two indicated “other.” The authors asked participants how many study-abroad, immersion or international travel experiences they had taken part in as either a participant or facilitator. Equal numbers of respondents reported either none or more than four ($n = 13$, 21% in each group), and one participant noted having more than 25 such experiences. Slightly fewer respondents reported one international experience ($n = 11$, 18%), and six (10%) reported two such experiences.

Program-level information that the respondents provided is included in Table 1. As one can see from this table, more than one-third of the respondents were from the Southern Region (37.7%), slightly more than one-quarter were from the North Central Region (27.9%), and substantially fewer were from the North Atlantic, Rocky Mountain or Western Regions. This distribution of respondents approximates the ACES regional membership, which includes regional percentages of 41.3% Southern, 26.4% North Central, 17.3% North Atlantic, 8.7% Western and 6.3% Rocky Mountain. All the programs that the respondents represented offered a master’s degree and 34% offered a doctoral degree. Accredited program tracks varied, with most programs offering clinical mental health or community counseling tracks (90.3%) and school counseling tracks (74.1%). Though there was no place for respondents to indicate the student enrollment of their programs, the average full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty size was 7.2 persons, with only 12% of programs having 12 or more faculty.

Table 1

Program-Level Information on Respondents

Program Information	<i>N</i>	%
ACES region		
Southern	23	37.7
North Central	17	27.9
North Atlantic	14	23.0
Rocky Mountain	2	3.3
Western	5	8.2
Degree programs offered		
Master’s	62	100.0
Specialist	15	24.0
Doctorate	21	34.0
Accredited program tracks offered		
Addiction counseling	0	0.0
Career counseling	3	4.8
Clinical mental health counseling/community counseling	56	90.3
Marriage, couple and family counseling	7	11.3
School counseling	46	74.1
Student affairs and college counseling	10	16.1
Other	13	21.0

Results

Responses to the core survey items offered insight into the specific nature of international activities in counselor preparation programs and how much support and structure the programs devoted to these activities. The authors examined these activities separately for both counselor educators and counselor trainees, with a majority of the responses summarized for each individual question in Table 2 (faculty activities) and Table 3 (student activities). For each of these two populations, the results characterized the nature and type of the international activities, how they were incorporated into expected practices, how they were financially supported, and what role international partners had in those activities.

Faculty Involvement in International Activities

The authors asked several questions to determine the level and type of program support for international activities of faculty. Responses are summarized in Table 2. Among the counselor education programs that the respondents represented, most (87.1%) did not incorporate international activities as a regular and expected endeavor for faculty. However, in most programs (82.2%), the institutional mission statement or philosophy supported or advocated for such involvement. The authors consistently found that a structured international component was lacking in over three-fourths of programs (77.4%).

Table 2

Program Support for and Faculty Involvement in International Activities

Item	Response	<i>N</i>	%
Does your program incorporate international activities as a regular and expected activity for faculty?	Yes	8	12.9
	No	54	87.1
Does the philosophy of your institution (mission statement) support/advocate for international programs and activities?	Yes	51	82.2
	No	10	16.1
	Missing	1	1.6
Does your program have a structured (organized) international component?	Yes	14	22.6
	No	8	77.4
	Missing	1	1.6
Is there departmental support for this international component?	Yes	13	21.0
	No	1	1.6
	Missing	48	77.4
Does your program have partner schools outside the United States?	Yes	17	27.4
	No	45	73.6
Do faculty regularly visit partner schools/agencies?	Yes	15	24.1
	No	2	3.2
	Missing	45	73.6
Is there faculty exchange with partner schools/agencies?	Yes	9	14.5
	No	8	12.9
	Missing	45	73.6
During the past 3 years, have any of your program faculty participated in international activities?	Yes	52	83.9
	No	10	16.1

During the past 3 years, in which of the following international activities have your faculty participated (check all that apply)?	Attendance at conferences outside the United States	35	56.5
	Presentations at conferences outside the United States	35	56.5
	Joint research with faculty outside the United States	23	37.1
	Study-abroad tours conducted individually or through American Counseling Association (ACA), Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) or other organizations	19	30.1
	Worked as a counselor or counselor educator outside the United States	18	29.0
	International faculty exchange	6	9.7
	Fulbright Scholar	8	12.9
	Other	9	14.5

Item	Response	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The financial contributions toward faculty participation in international activities include the following (scale of 0–100%):	Faculty member	30.75	38.38
	Department	24.88	34.99
	University	36.75	37.55
	Professional organizations	7.63	21.57

Most respondents (83.9%) reported that faculty had participated in international activities within the past 3 years. International activities of faculty included attendance and presentations at conferences outside the United States (56.5% each), joint research with faculty outside the United States (37.1%), and study-abroad tours (30.1%). Relatively few respondents reported international faculty exchange (9.7%) and Fulbright Scholars (12.9%).

Financial support for faculty international activities was reported to come from the faculty member or university in almost equal proportions, with a lower level of financial support from departments and extremely little from professional associations. The authors asked respondents to report relative percentage contributions from each of those four sources. As shown in Table 2, the standard deviations of responses to all four categories were relatively large, in all cases exceeding the absolute value of the mean. In short, there was a significant amount of variability in response to the question concerning sources of financial support for international activities of faculty.

Not shown in Table 2 are responses concerning departmental support for international programs, as most counselor educators who completed the survey did not respond to this question. Among the 14 who did respond, 13 (93% of those responding) indicated that there was departmental support for international activities, through either curricular focus or financial commitments. Over one-quarter of respondents (27.4%) reported that their program had a partner school outside the United States, and nearly all (88.2%) of those respondents reported that faculty regularly visited the partner school. Roughly one-half (52.9%) of respondents from programs with such international partnerships noted that they had reciprocal faculty exchanges with their partners.

Student Involvement in International Activities

Survey responses to questions concerning student involvement in international activities are summarized in Table 3. Slightly over one-fourth of the programs that respondents represented (29%) incorporated international activities as part of counselor training. Responses were split 50/50 on the question of whether students were actively encouraged to be involved in international activities outside the counselor education program. Respondents from only two programs (3.2%) noted that participation in international activities was required for graduation. Almost one-quarter of respondents represented programs (24.1%) that provided academic credit to students for participating in international activities. When programs did offer academic credit, it was more often for an elective course than a required one, though five respondents (8.1%) did note that their programs required the international course.

Table 3

Program Support for Student Involvement in International Activities

Item	Response	<i>N</i>	%
Does your program incorporate international activities as part of counselor training for students?	Yes	18	29.0
	No	44	71.0
Do students regularly visit partner schools/agencies?	Yes	9	14.5
	No	8	12.9
	Missing	45	73.6
Is there student exchange with partner schools/agencies?	Yes	6	9.6
	No	1	17.7
	Missing	45	73.6
Are students actively encouraged to be involved in international activities outside your program (e.g., international activities sponsored by other schools/organizations like AMCD or Association for Counselor Education and Supervision [ACES])?	Yes	31	50.0
	No	31	50.0
Is participation in these international activities required for students to graduate?	Yes	2	3.2
	No	16	25.8
	Missing	44	71.0
Can students receive academic credit for participating in these international activities?	Yes	15	24.1
	No	3	4.8
	Missing	44	71.0
The academic credit offered for international activities is best described as:	A required course	5	8.1
	An elective course	7	11.2
	A required or elective course	1	1.6
	Other	1	1.6
	Missing	48	77.4
Item	Response	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The financial contributions toward student participation in international activities include the following (scale of 0 to 100%):	Student	73.41	28.91
	Department	14.12	25.07
	University	11.35	18.13
	Professional organizations	1.12	3.16

Financial support for student participation in international activities was apparently limited. Again, participants responded to this question based on the percentage of funding provided by each of the four sources. Three-quarters of funding came directly from students themselves. Departments provided some support ($M = 14.12$, $SD = 25.07$), with some coming from the universities ($M = 11.35$, $SD = 18.13$), while support from professional associations was almost nonexistent ($M = 1.12$, $SD = 3.16$). As was true of faculty financial support, there was significant variability in responses to this question except in regard to support provided by professional associations.

Not shown in Table 3 are responses from the 17 respondents who reported their programs having partner schools. Among those respondents, 53% reported that students regularly visited the partner programs. Only 35% engaged in reciprocal student exchange with partner schools.

Discussion

Despite the respondents' reports of strong departmental and institutional commitments to internationalization from CACREP-accredited counselor education programs, the responses of 62 faculty members suggest that these programs have a relatively low level of actual involvement in international activities. However, over the past 3 years a significant number of individual faculty members have participated in international activities of their own accord. Attending and presenting at international conferences have been the primary faculty activities, with few engaging in faculty exchange or Fulbright scholarships. This finding contrasts with reports from counseling psychologists, for whom Fulbrights and faculty exchanges have been more frequent (Heppner et al., 2008).

Funding for international involvement differs considerably for faculty and students. Although faculty contribute more than one-third of the costs for their international involvement, they are much more likely than students to obtain support from their department and university. Professional associations are also slightly more likely to provide financial support for faculty than for students. If students are to engage in international activities, some consideration of financial support seems imperative.

Among programs that have partner schools, faculty and to a lesser extent students regularly visit their partners. However, faculty and student exchanges *from* international partners *to* American CACREP programs are not nearly as prevalent. From the current findings, it appears that internationalization occurs primarily in one direction, which validates several conclusions from Gerstein and Ægisdóttir's (2007) comprehensive review of the literature. The reasons for such a one-sided approach to internationalization are likely complex, and at this stage are still unknown. It could be that U.S. counselor education programs either do not encourage or may actually discourage international visitors or enrollment of international students. If that is the case, determining and addressing underlying reasons, such as language or logistical barriers, is an important next step. If other factors are involved, learning what those are could be a step toward reducing barriers and increasing more equal international exchanges.

Though structured (and reciprocal) international activities are not the norm across programs represented in this survey, two stand out as particularly interesting examples with regard to the effects of internationalization on counselor trainee development and on the logistical realities of implementing two-way internationalization. While at the University of Florida, Dr. Cirecie A. West-Olatunji organized two month-long immersions to South Africa and Botswana (see Shannonhouse & West-Olatunji, 2009, for a program summary). These events were optional for participating students, who received no course credit and some financial support for participation. However, they were effective at enhancing multicultural awareness (Shannonhouse & West-Olatunji, 2013;

West-Olatunji, Templeton, Goodman, & Mehta, 2011), and were structured in such a way as to validate and allow the students to learn from the natural helpers and para-professionals in southern Africa. Meanwhile, Dr. Suhyun Suh at Auburn University has developed an ongoing reciprocal international exchange between Auburn and Korean counseling students (for more information, see http://education.auburn.edu/academic_departments/serc/outreach/south-korea.html). This activity is provided at reduced cost to students by leveraging university funds (Auburn students pay the equivalent of 5 credit hours for 3 hours of credit plus a week of immersion), and it involves exchanging students and faculty from both institutions for coursework in addition to cultural immersion (Suh, Hansing, Booker, & Radomski, 2013).

While the results of this study were designed to serve as a baseline of internationalization in counselor education and not a compendium of current activities, the authors choose to showcase the initiatives of these two programs in order to facilitate dialogue. The first provides a peer-reviewed look at the benefits of internationalization and serves as a reminder of why the counseling profession has joined other disciplines in welcoming globalization: much can be learned from those who help in different places and different ways. The second serves as a model for how a counseling program can implement a reciprocal exchange that is structured into the curriculum and financially supported by funding sources invested in diversity. Both programs are built upon the premise that internationalization is multidirectional, in that all those working toward wellness across the globe have valuable perspectives from which others may learn, in an effort to better advance human dignity.

Implications

The current findings raise a number of questions concerning student and faculty participation in international counseling activities. For example, what are the reasons underlying faculty choices for international involvement? What inhibits involvement? Are language barriers or a lack of contacts, resources or finances the strongest deterrents? Though financial realities may prevent many international faculty and students from visiting U.S. counseling programs and thereby encourage one-way internationalization, is the exchange between U.S. counseling programs and their counterparts in wealthier nations also one-sided? How can reciprocal international cooperation and involvement increase? Larger systemic issues such as political pressures or economic strain may have an important effect on some of these unanswered questions, and future researchers should consider them.

Limitations

Whether the respondents adequately represented all accredited programs is impossible to determine. It is likely that some CACREP liaisons were faculty with international experiences while others were not. Though the authors asked that those in the latter group forward the survey link to a faculty member with more relevant experience, the number of participants who did so is unknown. In each case, the respondent provided program-level information rather than reporting as an individual. It is probable that even in the programs for which respondents reported high levels of international involvement, the respondents simply may not have known about some relevant faculty activities. It is also likely that respondents representing programs with international involvement were among those most inclined to respond to the survey. Overall, the results were limited by the response rate and respondents' knowledge of program faculty activities. While one must interpret the results with caution due to these limitations, these findings did provide the beginnings of a baseline to determine counselor education program involvement in international activities, which offers an important first step for future systematic efforts (e.g., Shannonhouse, 2013) to contextualize the internationalization of the counseling profession.

Conclusion

As the counseling profession continues to internationalize, it will be necessary for counselor education programs to provide training for both students and faculty to increase cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity. Institutional support will be essential in terms of both mission and financial resources for both students and faculty. Beyond the institution, faculty may require training and encouragement to undertake international activities beyond conference attendance. While international presentations and partner school visits are impressive for faculty vitae and university reports, true internationalization is a two-way process. The authors challenge counselor educators to find ways to extend a welcome to international visitors, which will result in increasing numbers of faculty and student exchanges, and equalize the balance of trade relative to the internationalization of the counseling profession.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

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Smiles from the Heart: Humanistic Counseling Considerations for Fathers of Sons with Asperger's Disorder



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This exploratory, qualitative study analyzed the narratives of four fathers of sons with Asperger's disorder, a form of autism, as they described the rewards, challenges and coping strategies associated with their lived experience. The author identified participants via a typical case sampling method; collected data with one-time, semistructured interviews; and utilized emergent theme analysis to highlight themes across the fathers' narratives. Fathers identified finding a clear communication system with their sons as most rewarding, behavioral issues with their sons as most challenging, and acceptance of their sons' condition as a coping strategy. Implications for humanistic counseling practice and future research are presented.

Keywords: fathers, autism, Asperger's disorder, rewards, coping

The counseling profession has long embraced concepts of humanism in theory and in practice. Rogers (1957, 1961) articulated within the six necessary and sufficient conditions for counseling that counselors should seek to understand the lived experiences of their clients. According to Mize (2003), a primary tenet of humanistic counseling is the belief that clients actively assign meaning to their experiences. Scholl, McGowan, and Hansen (2012) wrote that "humanistic practices and approaches to counseling . . . may be understood as those that highlight relating to people in empathic, respectful, and growth-producing ways" (p. 7).

There is a greater need for counselors to understand the experiences of parents of children with autism as the diagnosis rates of these disorders increase (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2014). Counselors whose orientations integrate behavioral interventions (e.g., cognitive-behavioral interventions, solution-focused interventions, rational emotive behavioral interventions) help parents use strategies to address the behavioral symptomology of autism in their children. Humanistic counseling interventions (e.g., narrative interventions, person-centered interventions) offer clients an opportunity to share their stories in an effort to develop self-capacities, stimulate change and be empowered when confronted with normative stressors of this experience (Rogers, 1986). The purpose of this exploratory study was to gain a more in-depth understanding of how fathers describe the rewards and challenges of raising their children with autism, and to report coping strategies for the challenges they have in common. Findings from the study help begin the process of using empirically based evidence to better understand the experiences of fathers of children with Asperger's disorder, a specific form of autism, which informs interventions for these fathers should they seek counseling support. The findings also can provide direction for the designs of future studies investigating related topics.

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Literature Review

Seligman and Darling (2007) reported that there are not enough studies of fathers of children with disabilities, and one must draw conclusions about these fathers' adjustment cautiously. The majority of empirical research on fathers of children with autism has focused on three related and specific areas regarding fathers' (a) reported stress levels, (b) feelings of stigma and (c) coping strategies (Hannon, 2013; Canary, 2008; DeMarle & le Roux, 2001; Dyson, 2010; Flippin & Crais, 2011; Gerstein, Crnic, Blacher, & Baker, 2009; Gray, 2002, 2003; Green, 2003; Hartley et al., 2010; Hartley, Barker, Seltzer, Greenberg, & Floyd, 2011; Meyer, 1995; Nixon & Cummings, 1999; Reichman, Corman, & Noonan, 2008; Rodrigue, Morgan, and Geffken, 1992; Seligman & Darling, 2007; Smith & Elder, 2010; Trute, Hiebert-Murphy, & Levine, 2007; Watzlawik & Clodius, 2011). It is important to note that most of these studies are not exclusive to fathers. The studies attempted to measure effects of autism on parent relationships, compare parent assessments, or compare effects between autism and other disabilities. A review of the literature for this study yielded only three empirical studies since 2000 that focused solely on fathers' reported experiences (Hannon, 2013; Gray, 2002, 2003). Even with these limitations, the current literature does offer insight into the experience of fathers of children with autism and provides a starting point for additional empirical studies to specifically investigate fathers' experiences with this phenomenon. Intentionally investigating the lived experiences of fathers—by using increasingly diverse methodological traditions—is important because of fathers' historic and current roles in the family and influence on their children's development.

Fathers of Children with Disabilities

The transition to fatherhood affects men's mental health. This experience is even more pronounced for fathers of children with disabilities. Studies have documented that fathers of children with disabilities respond to stress differently, interpret experiences differently and cope differently from mothers of children with disabilities (Garfield, Isacco, & Bartlo, 2011; Guzzo, 2011; Chin, Daiches, & Hall, 2011; Shezifi, 2004). It is appropriate to consider how childhood disability can affect the family life cycle and to share research associated with the experience of fathering children with disabilities, and specifically autism.

Theoretical Framework: Disability and the Family Life Cycle

One way to understand the impact of disability on the family is to consider the situation through a family systems lens. Carter and McGoldrick's (2005) family life cycle theory offers a family systems theoretical framework that captures the ways a childhood disability might both enrich and cause the family stress at different times. Carter and McGoldrick (2005) articulated six stages within the family life cycle, all requiring some emotional transition and possessing the potential for stress, which the authors refer to as *vertical* and *horizontal stressors*. Vertical stressors are family memories, traditions and expectations passed down through generations (e.g., family attitudes, expectations, taboos). Vertical stressors represent how individual family members respond to experiences based on a collective family identity and constructions of what is or is not acceptable. In contrast, a family experiences horizontal stressors over time as they cope with and adjust to the transitions in the family life cycle. Horizontal stressors can be predictable (e.g., young adults leaving home for education or career) or unpredictable (e.g., untimely death). The combination of vertical and horizontal stressors influence functioning based on a number of factors that include but are not limited to economic resources, community resources and coping strategies. The experience of becoming a father can be considered a horizontal stressor based on the normative social, emotional and familial changes associated with the transition (McGoldrick & Carter, 2003).

Autism's Influence on Fathers

The CDC reported in March 2014 that approximately one in 68 children living in the United States is diagnosed with autism, and that diagnosis rates have been on the rise in recent years (CDC, 2014). Counselors

in various settings (e.g., schools, rehabilitation centers, community agencies) have confronted the individual and ecological effects of the increase in diagnoses. The term *autism* generally encompasses a range of more specific autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), referred to as pervasive developmental disorders (PDDs) in the text revision of the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR)*. PDDs are considered Axis I diagnoses in the *DSM-IV-TR*, and described as being “. . . characterized by severe and pervasive impairment in several areas of development: reciprocal social interaction skills, communication skills, or the presence of stereotyped behavior, interests, and activities” (APA, 2000, p. 69).

When data were collected for this study (September–October 2011), the professional counseling community was employing the *DSM-IV-TR*. However, since the 2013 publication of the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)*, there are new and revised diagnoses and associated diagnostic criteria for what is now considered autism spectrum disorder. One major change was the incorporation of previously separate autism diagnoses (e.g., autistic disorder, Asperger’s disorder, child disintegrative disorder and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified) and the categorization of symptoms as severe, moderate or mild. Therefore, while Asperger’s disorder is not listed as a specific diagnosis in the *DSM-5*, individuals diagnosed with Asperger’s disorder would be considered to have autism spectrum disorder or autism, with severe, moderate or mild symptoms. The specific diagnosis influences treatment interventions that counselors, speech therapists, occupational therapists and other specially trained helping professionals may deliver. While some research has documented effective interventions or support for family members caring for children with autism, a significant amount of research has illuminated how families adjust to the diagnosis.

Stress, coping and stigma. An abundance of research exists on how children’s disabilities influence the experiences of their parents and typically developing siblings. A comparatively small amount of research has investigated how children’s disabilities specifically affect their fathers (Atkins, 1991; Barr & McLeod, 2010; Barr, McLeod, & Daniel, 2008; Canary, 2008; Dyson, 2010; DeMarle & le Roux, 2001; Gerstein et al., 2009; Green, 2003; Hannon, 2013; Iriarte & Ibarrola-García, 2010; Meyer, 1995; Nixon & Cummings, 1999; Reichman et al., 2008; Ross & Cuskelly, 2006; Seligman & Darling, 2007; Smith & Elder, 2010; Trute et al., 2007; Watzlawik & Clodius, 2011). Childhood disability places a horizontal stressor on families, challenging them to confront their own assumptions and beliefs about people with disabilities, and to adjust to the stress (i.e., vertical stressor) associated with the experience. The level of stress that families experience can be influenced by the type and severity of disability and contextual influences that might support or stigmatize disabilities. With autism diagnosis rates continuing to increase, special attention from the health care and science communities has yielded a deeper and broader understanding of autism including etiology, symptomology and effective interventions.

Normative responses to the stressors of raising children with autism can include mourning, stigma and partner/marital adjustment (Seligman & Darling, 2007). Another stressor for parents is the social challenges (e.g., peer interactions) that children with autism confront. Davis and Carter (2008) found that fathers experienced stress particularly about their children’s externalizing problems (e.g., interpersonal/behavioral challenges), whereas mothers were more concerned about their children’s ability to regulate their emotions. In a study measuring the interaction effects between stressors, social support, locus of control, coping styles and negative outcomes in parents of children with autism, Dunn, Burbine, Bowers, and Tantleff-Dunn (2001) found that fathers were more inclined to engage in escape/avoidant coping styles in response to stress. This type of response increased feelings of depression and isolation and predicted problems between parents.

In a comparative study of 60 fathers of children with autism, children with Down syndrome and typically developing children (20/group), Rodrigue et al. (1992) found that fathers of children with autism and Down syndrome reported more negative effects on their families than those in the comparison group and reported

more avoidant coping strategies than other fathers, and that fathers of girls with autism reported lower levels of social support. These types of comparisons are useful because they place fathering children with autism within the context of the fathers raising the children. The findings seem consistent with more general studies of parents, but offer more specific implications about how gender may influence how fathers make meaning of their experiences. Hartley, Seltzer, Head, and Abbeduto's (2012) study measuring the psychological well-being of 240 fathers of adolescents and young adults with autism, fragile X syndrome and Down syndrome found that fathers of children with autism reported higher depressive symptoms than fathers in the comparison groups, and that factors contributing to between-group differences in well-being included father's age, extent of child's behavior problems, presence of additional children with disabilities and maternal depressive symptoms. Two major limitations from this study include sample (majority of sample was college-educated, White men) and no reporting of the specific autism diagnosis.

Gray's (2003) study illuminated how gender differences in coping occur. However, one of the study's limitations is that it fails to provide any subsequent discussion on the influence that parents' respective coping strategies have on the marital partnership or the entire family system. Gray (2002) studied how parents of children with Asperger's disorder experienced *felt stigma* and *enacted stigma*, and found that the majority of parents in the study experienced felt stigma, or were made to feel different because of their children's diagnoses. Parents' feelings of embarrassment were the most common manifestations of this felt stigma. Gray (2002) defined enacted stigma as behaviors toward or in response to the parents based on the child's disability (e.g., people staring, being avoidant or making rude comments). Fathers in the study reported experiencing less felt and enacted stigma than mothers.

It is important to acknowledge that there have been positive outcomes associated with raising children with autism and other disabilities. Reichman et al. (2008) argued that positive outcomes for families can include increased awareness, capacity for resolve, and enhanced family cohesion. In sum, these interrelated and complex findings shed important light on how differently fathers perceive this experience and cope with the stress related to it. Variations in parent perception, assessment of children's needs and challenges, and strategies for coping with the challenges warrant attention. The present exploratory, qualitative study on the singular experiences of fathers of children with autism can offer a contribution to the counseling knowledge base.

Method

The author used a narrative inquiry design for this study in order to obtain the perspectives of fathers of children with autism and to report their self-described coping strategies for the challenges associated with this lived experience. Narrative inquiry seeks to understand what stories reveal about individuals, recognizing that people form and share identities as they recount and disclose their stories to others. The products from the study's data analysis process include a paradigmatic analysis of the data, which produces categories from common elements across the database (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Some studies about fathers of children with autism and other disabilities have used qualitative methodologies (Hannon, 2013; Gray, 2002, 2003), but much of the existing research has employed quantitative methodologies (Brobst, Clopton, & Hendrick, 2009; Freedman, Kalb, Zablotsky, & Stuart, 2011; Hartley et al., 2010; Hastings et al., 2005). The present study relied on the narratives of fathers of children with autism—derived from one-time interviews—as data. Their narratives offered new insight into how their specific experiences have influenced their identities. Given the current empirical literature on fathers of children with autism, this study's primary research questions were as follows:

1. What are the rewards of being the father of a child with autism?
2. What are the most significant challenges associated with being the father of a child with autism?
3. In what ways do fathers cope with the challenges of raising children with autism?

Recruitment

The author utilized a typical case sampling method for the study. Inclusion criteria of participants were fathers over 18 years old who spoke and understood English and had a child between the ages of 4 and 20 with autism. There was no incentive or compensation for participating. Miles and Huberman (1994) articulated that typical case sampling represents the average example of a particular phenomenon of study, which was useful in this case because it afforded the researcher the ability to study this phenomenon on an individual basis.

After the study received approval from the Institutional Review Board, the author sent 68 recruitment letters to parents and guardians of children currently receiving mental, rehabilitative, and behavioral health and support services from the local site of a multistate human service agency. The agency served children and adults diagnosed with addictive diseases, autism, and intellectual and developmental disabilities. Of the 68 letters, 54 went to parents whose children were receiving services specifically for diagnoses within the ASDs, as per the *DSM-IV-TR*. The letters asked potential participants to contact the author directly in order to confirm study eligibility. The author sought a sample of at least five participants in order to reach data saturation (Polkinghorne, 1989), although Boyd (2001) regarded 2–10 participants as sufficient to reach saturation. The letters yielded four inquiries from potential participants, all of whom were eligible. However, one participant was excluded from the study because of the inability to coordinate an appropriate interview time. The author identified one additional participant through snowball sampling recruitment, which is a method of expanding a study's sample size by asking current study participants to recommend additional participants (Babbie, 1995; Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Dane, 1990). Therefore, the author conducted four interviews.

Participants

The author recruited participants from a small town in the northeastern region of the United States. This rural town has a predominantly White population. The recruitment letters asked for fathers of children with autism without specifying a particular diagnosis, and yielded four men reporting to be the biological fathers of sons diagnosed with Asperger's disorder. The participants were all White, ranging from 36–59 years old. Their sons ranged from 6–16 years old and had been diagnosed with Asperger's disorder between the ages of 3 and 8. Table 1 highlights descriptive information about the study's participants and their sons.

Table 1

Description of Participants

Participant	Age	Marital status	Highest level of education	Occupation	Age of son with Asperger's disorder	Son's age at diagnosis
A	59	Divorced	Post-secondary certification	Oil professional	14	8
B	37	Remarried	Master's degree	Meteorologist	16	6
C	54	Married	Master's degree	Historian/ Stay-at-home dad	11	7
D	36	Married	Doctoral degree	Professor	6	3

Note. Mean participant age = 46.5 years; mean age of son with Asperger's disorder = 11.75 years; mean age of son at diagnosis = 6 years old

Data Collection and Analysis

Collection. The author collected data during one-time, semistructured interviews with each participant, conducted at locations convenient for participants. One interview took place in a participant's home, one in a participant's work location and two in the author's work location. The author conducted, audio-recorded and transcribed the interviews, which ranged in length from 35–60 minutes. The author inquired specifically about what the fathers identified as rewards of being fathers of children with Asperger's disorder, the challenges of being the fathers of children with Asperger's disorder, and the fathers' coping strategies. The interviews also included broader, descriptive inquiries (e.g., tell me about your son) to better understand the complexities and nuances of the fathers' experiences.

Analysis. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) offered theoretical and practical suggestions for appropriately analyzing qualitative data, which include systematically searching and rearranging interview transcripts, memos and other accumulated materials in order to increase understanding about these materials and to assist in presenting the researcher's discoveries to others. Data analysis for this study included organizing the data, sorting them into manageable parts, synthesizing, looking for patterns, realizing what was important and what was to be learned, and determining what and how to report. The author analyzed data through analysis of narratives, using the *emergent themes approach* (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). This method required an extensive review of interview transcripts to identify at least two things: (a) commonalities in experiences and shared perspectives, and (b) interpretation of participants' experiences. The emergent themes approach assumes that conceptual themes will emerge from the data. Analysis of narratives uses paradigmatic cognition to deduce categories and create order among narratives from the interview data (Polkinghorne, 1995). The analysis required identifying common themes and conceptual categories between the narratives by reviewing the interview data and member checking. Identifying the common themes and concepts required recursive movement from recognized themes to researcher-proposed categories (Hammersly, 1992).

Theme identification began with coding, in which the author labeled the raw data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The author examined participants' narratives to determine what statements or phrases seemed essential or revealing about the nature of being the father of a child with Asperger's disorder. The author categorized codes based on the frequency and consistency of shared experiences, perspectives and interpretations reported by participants (Laviani, 2011). After organizing the identified codes under more abstract categories, with each category containing a cluster of codes that pertained to broader themes, the author created a matrix to identify and display the prominent themes that emerged across narratives (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and to determine which themes occurred most frequently.

Trustworthiness. Hays & Singh (2012) articulated that various aspects of the research endeavor involve trustworthiness, including the research process and design, data analysis, and reporting of findings. Furthermore, they wrote that there are criteria or standards for trustworthiness in a research study and strategies to maintain trustworthiness throughout the study. The strategies to meet the criteria for trustworthiness for this study included reflexive journaling, simultaneous data collection and analysis, member checking, and creating an audit trail. The author also met with two faculty mentors experienced in qualitative data analysis throughout the data collection and analysis process to discuss his personal experiences with this phenomenon and his own biases that could have influenced the data collection and analysis processes. The committee members also assisted in the review of transcripts and the coding process. The cumulative effect of these strategies provided a source of data triangulation and enhanced the study's credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Researcher-as-instrument statement. Qualitative researchers have discussed the ways in which researchers should document their role in the context of their work (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Glesne, 2011; Hays

& Singh, 2012; Wang, 2008). The author is a 37-year-old father of an elementary school-aged son diagnosed with a specific form of autism, PDD-NOS, and is married to the child's biological mother. The author and his wife also are parents of a daughter 19 months older than their son. The author was a school counselor and cofounded a nonprofit advocacy organization with his wife to support parents of children with developmental disabilities, particularly autism, prior to enrolling in doctoral studies.

Reflexive exercises and simultaneous collection and analysis. Before beginning this research, the author engaged in *epoche* as an early reflexive exercise. Patton (2002) and Creswell (2006) wrote that *epoche* requires researchers to fully document and describe their personal experiences with the studied phenomenon in order to increase their awareness of how they are biased, and to be clear about the ways they are personally affected by the research process and eventual results. The author also engaged in reflexive journaling. He made journal entries after each interview and included reactions to participants, inclinations about potential findings, and thoughts and feelings about the data collection and analysis process.

Member checking. Member checking is the researcher's ongoing consultation with participants to test the "goodness of fit" of developing findings, and Lincoln and Guba (1985) cited it as a key strategy for establishing trustworthiness. Member checking requires involving participants in the research process in order to ensure that the researcher accurately communicates their intended meanings when outlining overall themes. The member checking process for this study took place at two points—during interviews (e.g., asking for clarity and confirming understanding) and after interviews (e.g., sharing transcripts for review and validation).

Results

Data saturation was achieved for each of the three research questions. Results from the interview data yielded three themes. The fathers described in detail the rewards of fathering children with Asperger's disorder, the challenges of fathering children with Asperger's disorder, and the ways the fathers cope with those challenges. The fathers described the most rewarding aspects of fathering their sons with Asperger's disorder as experiences in which they could experience clear communication with their sons. The fathers described the most challenging aspects of fathering their sons with Asperger's disorder as those related to behavioral symptoms. The fathers described their coping strategies for those challenges as activities that allowed them to experience respite and acceptance. Quotations from the fathers elucidate the identified themes.

Clear Communication as Most Rewarding

All of the fathers discussed the various ways clear communication with their sons shaped the rewards of this lived experience. The symptomology associated with autism makes this description logical. Individuals with Asperger's disorder may not experience the verbal language communication barriers that others face with different forms of autism, but individuals with Asperger's disorder can have great difficulty reading and interpreting social cues. The feelings associated with clear communication patterns, especially when communication barriers exist, can yield feelings of relief and reward.

Participant D, whose son was 6 years old, expressed the rewards in terms of his son effectively communicating his affection and love.

The thing I love about him most . . . like I've said before is his reciprocal love to people which is sort of, you know, not typical for Asperger's children. But, you know, he loves to hug and those sorts of things.

Participant B discussed the rewards of communication with his son regarding their shared interests in certain video games and how shared interests deepen their relationship.

I know he went through a phase where he loved Texas Hold 'Em Poker and I like poker, too. So, we sat down and for months we would . . . just play for 3 to 4 to 5 hours and he didn't get tired of it.

Devising an effective communication method can be important to fathers of children with autism. Hannon (2013) found that the process of becoming oriented to autism, which includes learning about the condition and helping others learn about the condition, can be stressful for fathers. The subsequent adjustments to autism—including adjustment of attitudes and defining success—can take a toll on fathers. The data indicated that fathers from the present study found effective ways to communicate, thereby helping them identify those processes as rewarding.

Behavioral Issues as Most Challenging

According to the data from this study, the most challenging aspects of fathering sons with Asperger's disorder pertained to the behavioral symptoms associated with autism. Prior research has confirmed this finding. Davis and Carter (2008) found that behavioral symptoms, particularly interpersonal behavioral problems (e.g., inability to behave appropriately in social settings) in children with autism are a significant source of stress for their fathers. Each father discussed a different behavioral challenge. Participant C expressed frustration about his 11-year-old son's arguing, manipulating and lying, even when the truth about a situation was obvious.

He'll be caught in a lie and he'll just deny it. . . . We know his mom didn't do it . . . no one in the house did it. But he continues to not acknowledge that he was the one . . . running up some bills [on the cable bill ordering games and movies]. . . . So, the arguing, the lying, the manipulation . . . we're trying to get him to be honest, is just one of the things we're trying to work through with the therapist and in school a little bit.

Participant D shared his frustration with public outbursts and how it is hard for him not to be able to control or defuse the situation quickly. He shared the following:

Sudden outbursts . . . crying, being stubborn, "I'm not gonna do this, I'm not gonna do that," . . . taking something very small and blowing it out of proportion. Whether it's in the privacy of our house or in public . . . those are the kind of things that . . . sometimes I have to, as a father. I kind of lose it. . . . Those are the things I still have a really hard time dealing with. Like, this just came out of nowhere. This just doesn't make any sense.

Acceptance as a Coping Strategy

Henderson and Bryan characterized coping mechanisms as "emotions and behaviors that allow an individual to adjust to problems. The survival of all people depends on their being able to regulate personal feelings, beliefs, and actions so that their anxiety remains at a manageable level" (2011, p. 157). All four participants reported coping strategies that indicated the value of accepting their sons' conditions in order to cope effectively with the challenges.

Participants A and B talked about how they have come to accept the challenges of their sons' conditions. Participant A shared how his Christian faith has helped him accept the challenges. He shared the following:

First of all, pray. Put your faith in Jesus and find Jesus and give it to him and he'll walk you all through it together and it'll all be all right. But you . . . can't give up on the kid. It ain't his fault he's got what

he's got. So first of all don't bail on him. You've got to be rock-solid for him because it's hard enough for him because he's already different.

Participant B discussed a similar acceptance of the emotional highs and lows of this experience:

You understand that there's going to be certain situations where he's not going to be able to deal well and you just have to understand that. And, [if] you as a parent or caretaker can't understand that . . . society in general is definitely not going to understand that. Just dealing with knowing what he has to deal with. [He does] not look you in the eye when you're talking to him, talk[s] under his breath instead of talking to you. I understand all those as part of his disorder . . . I don't hold that personally, I don't find that as a lack of respect. It's just how he is.

Studies assessing the ways fathers of children with autism cope have been limited, and results have been mixed. Dunn et al. (2001) studied the interaction effects between stressors, social support, locus of control, coping styles and negative outcomes among parents of children with autism. Their study's results indicated that escape/avoidant coping styles, which were higher among the fathers, correlated with increased feelings of depression, isolation and spousal problems in parents.

There is evidence suggesting that specific coping strategies predict more positive moods and overall greater psychological well-being in parents of children with autism. Pottie and Ingram (2008) found that coping strategies that were problem-focused, engaged social support, and used positive reframing, emotion regulation, and compromise predicted more positive psychological well-being and better moods in parents. A recent study found that effective coping among six fathers of children with autism meant engaging in activities that helped the fathers achieve a sense of personal balance (e.g., prayer, exercise, disk jockeying; Hannon, 2013).

Discussion

It is worth considering the integration of humanistic counseling tenets when working with fathers of children with Asperger's disorder. The results of this study point to the need for counselors to understand the lived experiences of fathers of sons diagnosed with Asperger's disorder. The importance of instilling hope by focusing on the rewards of this fathering experience and demonstrating empathy can potentially assist counselors in their work with these fathers.

Instilling Hope Through Strength-Based Interventions

The instillation of hope has been associated with Yalom and Leszcz's (2005) curative factors of group therapy. However, across theoretical orientations, counselors assist clients in finding hope in the ability to adjust to or overcome their presenting issues and eventually experience wellness. A humanistic, strength-based approach to counseling is one attempt toward this goal. Strength-based counseling interventions intentionally encourage clients to identify, acknowledge and take pride in their strengths and assets versus solely focusing on the challenges that presenting issues may elicit; such interventions also align with humanistic approaches to counseling (Whitmarsh & Mullette, 2009). As a result, clients are ideally better able to reconceptualize their presenting issues and construct a different, less pathologizing identity.

The participants articulated the rewards of fathering children with Asperger's disorder as being able to communicate clearly (through verbal and nonverbal language) with their sons. Counselors can assist fathers with their adjustment to Asperger's disorder by learning about ways Asperger's disorder positively and uniquely enhances a child's experience, and by helping fathers embrace the positive attributes associated with the disorder. For example, researchers have appropriately identified communication barriers as a symptom

of autism. The notion of limited communication can be interpreted as absence of communication. Counselors can remind fathers that all family members communicate and can assist fathers in reconstructing ideas about communication to extend beyond verbal communication and highlight the ways their children do communicate (i.e., nonverbally through body language and other communication systems). The fathers in this study discussed how rewarding it was to find and use effective communication systems, most of which were not verbal. Counselors can use this example to highlight the strengths of fathers and sons in this situation. The fathers engaged with their sons enough to find effective communication systems, and the sons learned and practiced skills that require interpretation of verbal and nonverbal language, which can be delayed or impaired in children with Asperger's disorder.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to communicate an understanding of another's worldview or experience and is a core value in humanistic counseling (Hazler & Barwick, 2001; Krebs, 1975; Lyons & Hazier, 2002; Rogers, 1957, 1961). Integrating a humanistic orientation can facilitate counselors' heightened understanding of how fathers of children with Asperger's disorder make meaning of their experiences and, consequently, allow the fathers to experience empathy in ways they may have never experienced it before (Mize, 2003), particularly regarding the aspects of parenting that the fathers in this study described as most challenging. Scholl et al. (2012) wrote, "humanism is unified by an overarching philosophy of human irreducibility. Accordingly, humans can be understood only as whole beings and should never be viewed as by-products of other processes" (p. 7). Helping fathers grasp that neither they nor their sons can be reduced to a particular diagnosis or symptoms associated with the diagnosis might facilitate a healthier conceptualization of their experience as fathers of sons with Asperger's disorder. Counselors can use the findings from this study along with Seligman and Darling's (2007) work to better understand how fathers may make sense of the more challenging parts of fathering children with Asperger's disorder. Seligman and Darling (2007) noted the following:

Fathers tend to perceive the diagnosis of the disability as an instrumental crisis, whereas mothers see it as an expressive crisis. . . . Fathers tend to be more concerned than mothers about the adoption of socially acceptable behavior by their children—especially their sons—and they are more anxious about the social status and occupational success of their offspring. (p. 223)

Limitations

This study provides counselors with valuable information on the experience of fathers of children with Asperger's disorder. However, there are three limitations within the study that warrant attention: (a) the small sample size, (b) the lack of racial and ethnic diversity, and (c) the inability to generalize the findings to the broader population of fathers of sons with Asperger's disorder.

The small sample size of the study simultaneously strengthens and limits the findings. Qualitative methodological traditions usually do not engage large sample sizes due to their focus on collecting in-depth data and investigating processes of human interactions and phenomena (Buckley, 2010). The sample size in this study was particularly small for at least two significant reasons: low response rate to recruitment efforts, and the fact that mothers typically act as primary caregivers and coordinators of their children's therapeutic services. The low response rate was no surprise considering the larger phenomenon of researchers not actively sampling fathers of children with various forms of autism for research about their experiences. Mothers of children receiving services at the recruitment site were overwhelmingly the most consistent parent with whom the agency interacted. Consequently, mothers were likely the ones who received and opened recruitment letters, and responses depended on whether they encouraged the fathers to participate.

A second and related limitation of the study is the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the sample. It is important for counselors to intentionally find more diverse samples of fathers of children with Asperger's disorder in an effort to understand this phenomenon more accurately. For example, Hannon (2013) sampled six African-American fathers of children with different forms of autism, and among the findings was a need to assess the fathers' social and financial capital and consequent ability to secure quality services for their children based on their racial identity. Members of different racial and ethnic populations may or may not report the same concerns, but additional inquiry is important. A more diverse sample can inform the counseling knowledge base on any potential similarities and differences in experiences compared to the results from this study. Additional research can inform the broader and more effective practice of counseling fathers, but also help others understand the subtleties that may exist for members of different racial and ethnic groups; such work will enhance the counseling profession's quest to provide culturally competent clinical interventions for diverse populations.

The last limitation of the study is the inability to generalize the findings to the broader population of fathers of sons with Asperger's disorder. The importance of this topic for the professional counseling community warrants more qualitative, in-depth studies to inform the counseling knowledge base about the intricacies and nuances of the Asperger's disorder experience that qualitative methodological traditions can reveal. However, the knowledge base also can greatly benefit from studies that use larger sample sizes to discover the extent to which findings can be generalized to the larger population of fathers of sons with Asperger's disorder.

Conclusion

This study is a step toward better understanding the family and ecological influence of autism because it provides the counseling community with the knowledge necessary to more effectively offer counseling and related services to fathers of children with Asperger's disorder. Counselors should continue to pursue this research agenda as the prevalence of this lived experience continues to increase in the identified population of fathers. As a result, effective strength-based interventions that consider the distinct needs and requests of this population must be further researched and developed. Continuing to investigate this phenomenon is beneficial for both research purposes and practical application.

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Appendix

Eligibility and Interview Protocol

Eligibility/Screening Questions

1. Are you over 18 years old?
2. Are you able to speak and understand English?
3. Are you the father of a child with autism?
4. Is your child with autism between the ages of 4–20?

Demographic Questions

1. How old are you?
2. How old is your child with autism?
3. When was he diagnosed with autism?
4. Does your child with autism have any siblings? If so, how many?
5. What is your highest level of completed education?
6. What is your occupation?
7. How many people live in your household?

Semistructured Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your son.
2. Describe your experience as a dad of a child with autism.
3. Discuss the most rewarding aspects of being a dad of a child with autism.
4. Discuss the challenges associated with being the dad of child with autism.
5. How do you cope with the stress of parenting a child with autism?
6. Have you considered seeking help (counseling, support group, etc.) to adjust to the challenges of being the dad of a child with autism?
7. Describe your relationship with the mother of your child with autism.
8. How has your child's diagnosis affected that relationship?
9. How would you advise other dads of children with autism to prepare for the rewards and challenges of this unique experience?

Profiling the Personality Traits of University Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students at a Research University in Malaysia



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Research universities in Malaysia are striving to transform into world-class institutions. These universities have the capacity to attract the best students to achieve excellence in education and research. It is important to monitor the psychological well-being of students during the transformation process so that proactive intervention can help students cope with the learning and research demands. This study profiled and monitored the personality traits of postgraduate and undergraduate students in a selected Malaysian research university using a quantitative research method. The researchers profiled personality traits using an online assessment, the Behavioral Management Information System (BeMIS), and tracked real and preferred personality traits and positive changes during rapid institutional transition.

Keywords: personality traits, BeMIS, undergraduate students, research universities, psychological well-being

Malaysia is advancing toward a knowledge-based economy and relies heavily on its universities to educate and train the much-needed human capital for the country (Fernandez, 2010). Research universities have the capacity to attract the best students and have the autonomy to select students who excel in education and research. Various measures are being implemented to transform universities into world-class institutions (Wan, 2008). The institutional transformation at Malaysian universities focuses on critical areas such as governance, leadership, academia, teaching and learning, as well as research and development (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). Educational institutions must monitor the psychological profile and well-being of their students, especially those who are potentially at risk of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, as well as substance abuse, in order to promote optimum human capital development (Wynaden, Wichmann, & Murray, 2013). Moreover, during the institutional transformation process, all levels of the university community, including students, may experience changes driven by higher standards and demands in teaching and learning as well as research performance (Schraeder, Swamidass, & Morrison, 2006) that might result in stress (Becker et al., 2004; Gladstone & Reynolds, 1997; Smollan & Sayers, 2009). Certain personality traits may build the community's resilience in coping with psychological stress (Lievens, Ones, & Dilchert, 2009; Nelson, Cooper, & Jackson, 1995). A detailed personality profile of university students can help research institutions put in place necessary support systems to strengthen students' well-being during institutional transformation.

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The Impact of Institutional Transformation

Institutional transformation at research universities in Malaysia can result in stress, anxiety and uncertainty for students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Successful coping with new demands is integral to the process of transformation. Failure to cope with stressors may lead to fatigue and depressive mood. Such physical and psychological symptoms may impair daily living, work and school performance, and learning ability (Goretti, Portaccio, Zipoli, Razzolini, & Amato, 2010; See, Abdullah, Teoh, & Yaacob, 2011). Organizational change may affect personality changes in students and impact academic performance (Hornig, Hu, Hong, & Lin, 2011; Nelson et al., 1995; Oreg & Sverdluk, 2011; See et al., 2011). Ongoing research including profiling and monitoring the personality traits and psychosocial behavior of students can assist students in adapting successfully (Marshall, 2010). Counselors and psychologists at the university can help students develop positive coping strategies during stressful transitional periods.

Personality Characteristics

Connor-Smith and Flachsbart (2007) have defined *personality* as characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors over time and across situations. Some theorists have described coping as a process of the personality responding to stress (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007). For example, individuals with the personality trait of extraversion may seek social support during life crisis, while someone with the trait of neuroticism may respond with avoidance or denial. Thus, personality traits may influence university students' responses and coping skills in stressful situations. Individuals with an extraverted personality tend toward optimistic assessment of accessible coping resources and react less intensely to stress, while those with a neurotic personality often experience high rates of stress and intense emotional and physiological reactivity to stress (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007). Personality predispositions can predict an individual's ability to adapt to change. Resilient traits enable stress management in reaction to institutional transformation (Nelson et al., 1995; Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011; See et al., 2011). The goal of this study was to analyze the personality profile of undergraduate and postgraduate students at a research university in Malaysia during institutional transformation, and to propose proactive interventions to help the student community cope with change.

Overview of the Study

The selected research university in this study was awarded the status of Accelerated Program for Excellence (APEX) in 2008, making it the first and only APEX university in Malaysia. APEX is a fast-track development program that aims to enable a selected university to transform and seek world-class status (Razak, 2009). The APEX program has been identified as a critical initiative to increase the level of excellence of higher education in Malaysia (Razak, 2009). An APEX university has the autonomy to select students based on academic merit and other criteria that the university deems essential. For this study, the researchers randomly selected from among postgraduate and undergraduate students who had volunteered to participate, and used the Behavioral Management Information System (BeMIS) to investigate the students' personality profile and well-being. The research objectives included the following: (a) profile the real and preferred personality traits of the university students during institutional transformation, and (b) explore personality changes over different phases during the university's transitional period.

Participants and Design

This longitudinal study gathered data relating to personality traits and psychosocial behaviors of postgraduate and undergraduate students over three phases. Seventy-eight students (34 undergraduate students

and 44 postgraduate students) participated in phase 1; 142 students (80 undergraduate students and 62 postgraduate students) participated in phase 2; and 169 students (72 undergraduate students and 97 postgraduate students) participated in phase 3.

Instrument

The BeMIS is an online assessment and reporting tool used to measure personality. The BeMIS was developed using the Adjective Check List (ACL), a standardized personality trait measure comprised of 300 adjectives commonly used to describe personality traits (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983). The ACL is capable of effectively measuring 37 personality traits under five main categories of traits: (a) responsiveness, (b) psychological needs, (c) specific responses, (d) interpersonal behavior and (e) cognitive orientation (Gough & Heilbrun, n.d.; Center for Credentialing and Education, 2009). The 37 personality traits are enthusiasm, optimism, negativity, communality, achievement, dominance, endurance, order, exhibition, psychologically perceptive, nurturance, affiliation, social energy, autonomy, aggression, change, support seeking, self-blaming, deference, counseling readiness, self-control, self-confidence, personal adjustment, self-satisfaction, creativity, structure valuing, masculinity, femininity, fault finding, respectful, work centered, playful, security seeking, affected, intellectualistic, pragmatic and scientific. The behavior for each scale is presented in percentile ranks, and grouped into real and preferred personality traits. The real-self personality traits are the existing traits, and the preferred-self traits are the desired traits. The mean for each measured behavior is 50, with a standard deviation of 10. On average, scores range between 40 and 60. A score of 60 is considered high and indicates a strong expression of the trait. A score of less than 40 is considered low and suggests suppression of the trait. Any extreme score (exceeding 70 or less than 30) may reveal stress and dissatisfaction with life (Gough & Heilbrun, n.d.). The BeMIS was translated into Bahasa Malaysia and the reliability of the Bahasa Malaysia version was tested (See et al., 2011). The reliability and validity of the BeMIS and ACL have been adequately substantiated (See et al., 2011; Center for Credentialing and Education, 2009; Gough & Heilbrun, n.d.).

Procedure

The researchers conducted the first phase of the study 1 year after the start of the university transformation process. They carried out phase 2 of the study 18 months after the university embarked on the transformation agenda, and carried out the third phase two and a half years after the start of the transformation process. The researchers sent questionnaires to all 26 schools in the university, requesting for each school to randomly select five postgraduate students and five undergraduate students to participate in the study. Participants were required to respond to BeMIS twice during each phase. The first time participants chose adjectives that they thought described them as they really were, while the second time they chose adjectives that they would prefer to describe them. In addition to the questionnaire, participants received a participant information and consent form that served to protect the confidentiality of student information.

Results

Postgraduate Students' Personality Profile

Figure 1 shows the real-self and the preferred-self traits of the postgraduate students in phase 1 of the study. The postgraduate students did not indicate any extreme low scores (less than 30) or extreme high scores (more than 70) during this phase of the study. The researchers performed a *t* test, and found significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in 17 of the 37 traits between the real self and the preferred self of postgraduate students. Among these 17 traits, four traits were significantly higher in the real self, compared to the preferred self: negativity, support seeking, self-blaming and security seeking. In contrast, 13 traits were significantly higher in the preferred self than the real self (optimism, achievement, dominance, endurance, order, affiliation, self-confidence, personal adjustment, self-satisfaction, structure valuing, masculinity, respectful and work centered), indicating that the postgraduate students desired to be stronger in these traits.

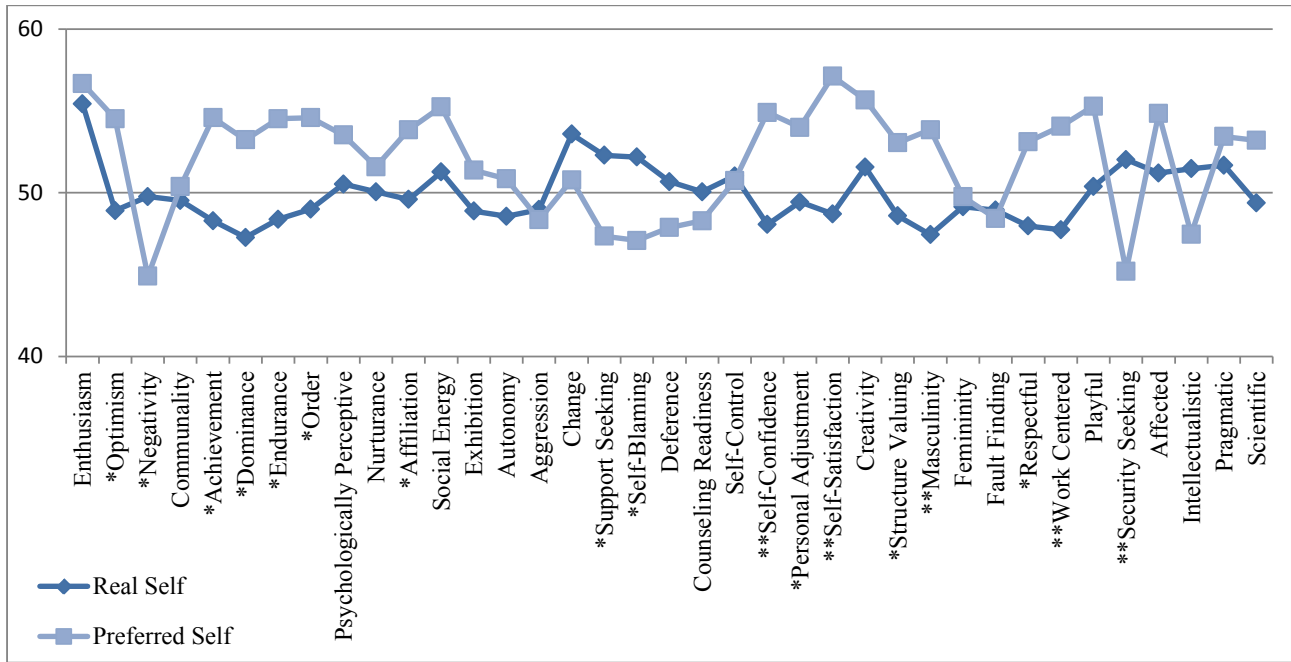


Figure 1. Postgraduate students' personality traits (real/preferred) in phase 1. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

The real-self and the preferred-self traits of the postgraduate students in phase 2 of the study appear in Figure 2. The postgraduate students did not indicate any extreme low scores (less than 30) or extreme high scores (more than 70) during this phase of the study. The researchers found 24 traits to be significantly different ($p < 0.05$) between the real self and the preferred self of postgraduate students. Among the 24 traits, the researchers found five traits to be significantly higher in the real self than the preferred self: negativity, support seeking, self-blaming, security seeking and intellectualistic. The researchers found 19 of the 24 traits to be significantly higher in the preferred self than the real self (optimistic, achievement, dominance, endurance, order, psychologically perceptive, affiliation, exhibition, self-confidence, personal adjustment, self-satisfaction, creativity, structure valuing, masculinity, respectful, work centered, playful, affected, and scientific), indicating that the postgraduate students desired to be stronger in these traits.

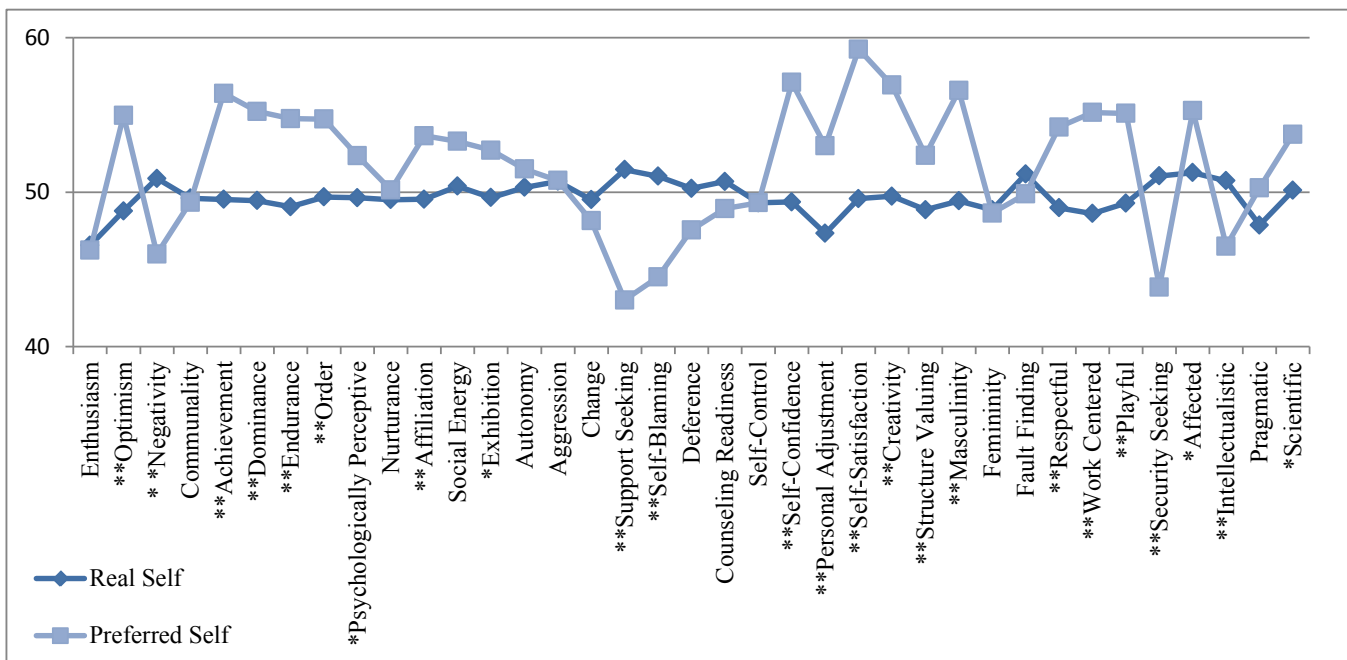


Figure 2. Postgraduate students' personality traits (real/preferred) in phase 2. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

In phase 3, as revealed in Figure 3, the institutional transformation produced strong preferred-self traits (scores of more than 60), including optimism, self-satisfaction, creativity, playful, self-confidence and dominance. The postgraduate students indicated scores below 40 for two preferred-self traits—support seeking and security seeking—indicating a suppression of the traits. The postgraduate students did not indicate any extreme low scores (less than 30) or extreme high scores (more than 70) for either the real-self or the preferred-self traits in phase 3. The incongruence between the real-self and the preferred-self traits was most exaggerated in phase 3 (Figure 3), in which the researchers found 25 traits to be significantly different ($p < 0.05$). The five traits found to be significantly higher in the real self were the same as in phase 2 (negativity, support seeking, self-blaming, security seeking and intellectualistic). The 20 traits found to be significantly higher in the preferred self were similar to the ones in phase 2 (optimistic, achievement, dominance, endurance, order, psychologically perceptive, affiliation, exhibition, self-confidence, personal adjustment, self-satisfaction, creativity, structure valuing, masculinity, respectful, work centered, playful, affected and scientific), with the addition of the nurturance trait.

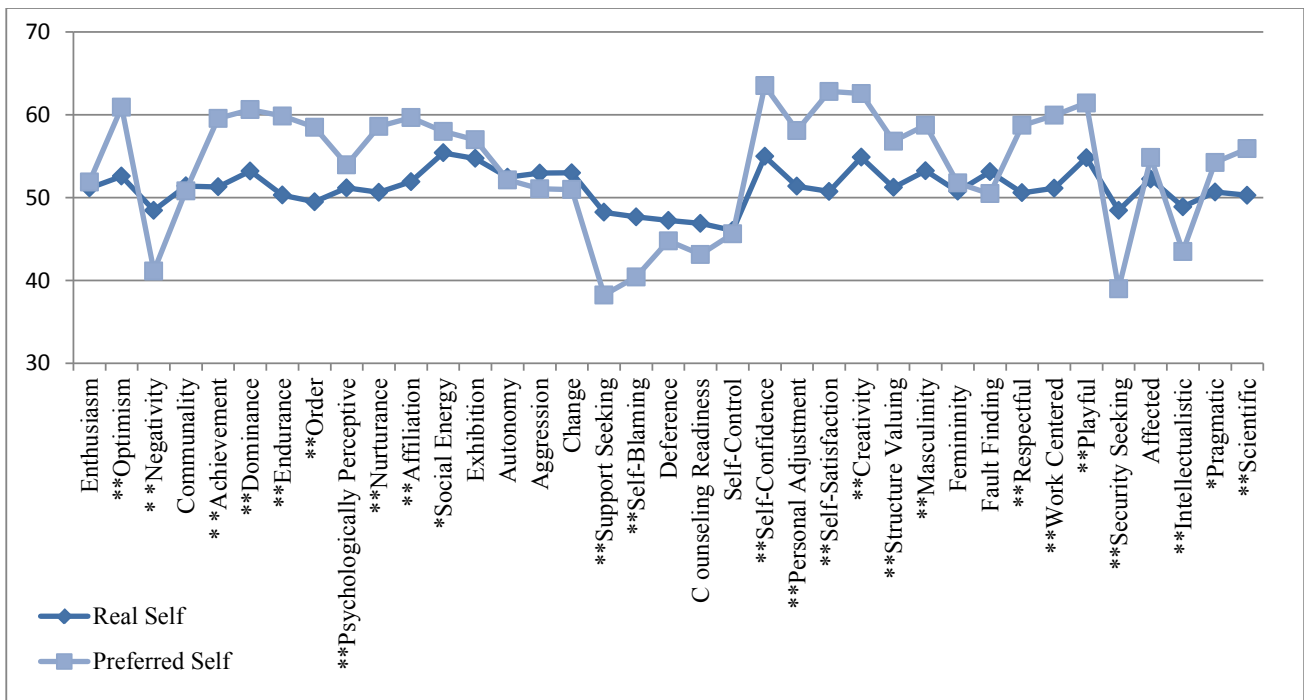


Figure 3. Postgraduate students' personality traits (real/preferred) in phase 3. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

Undergraduate Students' Personality Profile

The real-self and the preferred-self traits of undergraduate students in phase 1 of the study appear in Figure 4. The undergraduate students did not indicate any extreme low scores (less than 30) or extreme high scores (more than 70) during the first phase of the study. The researchers performed a t test on the real-self and the preferred-self traits of the undergraduate students and found significant differences ($p < 0.05$). In phase 1, 26 traits of the real self and the preferred self of the undergraduate students had significant differences. Six traits—negativity, support seeking, self-blaming, fault finding, security seeking and intellectualistic—were found to be significantly higher in the real self compared to the preferred self. The other 20 traits were significantly higher in the preferred self than the real self, indicating that the undergraduate students desired to be stronger in the following 20 traits: optimistic, achievement, dominance, endurance, order, psychologically perceptive, nurturance, affiliation, social energy, aggression, self-confidence, personal adjustment, self-satisfaction, creativity, structure valuing, masculinity, respectful, work centered, playful and scientific.

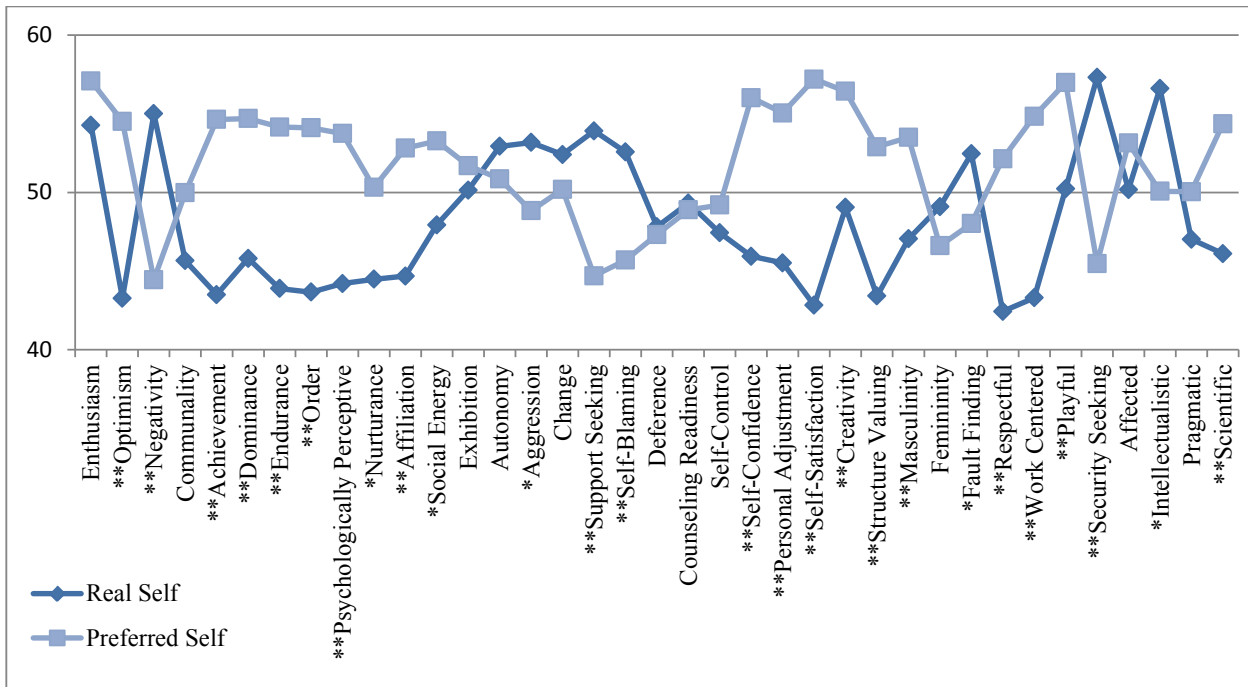


Figure 4. Undergraduate students' personality traits (real/preferred) in phase 1. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

Figure 5 shows the real-self and the preferred-self personality traits of the undergraduate students in phase 2. The undergraduate students did not indicate any extreme low scores (less than 30) or extreme high scores (more than 70) in phase 2. In this phase, the researchers found 27 traits to be significantly different ($p < 0.05$) between the real self and the preferred self. Five of the 27 traits (negativity, support seeking, self-blaming, security seeking and intellectualistic) were found to be significantly higher in the real self than the preferred self. The following 22 of the 27 traits were found to be significantly higher in the preferred self than the real self: optimistic, achievement, dominance, endurance, order, psychologically perceptive, nurturance, affiliation, social energy, exhibition, self-confidence, personal adjustment, self-satisfaction, creativity, structure valuing, masculinity, respectful, work centered, playful, affected, pragmatic and scientific.

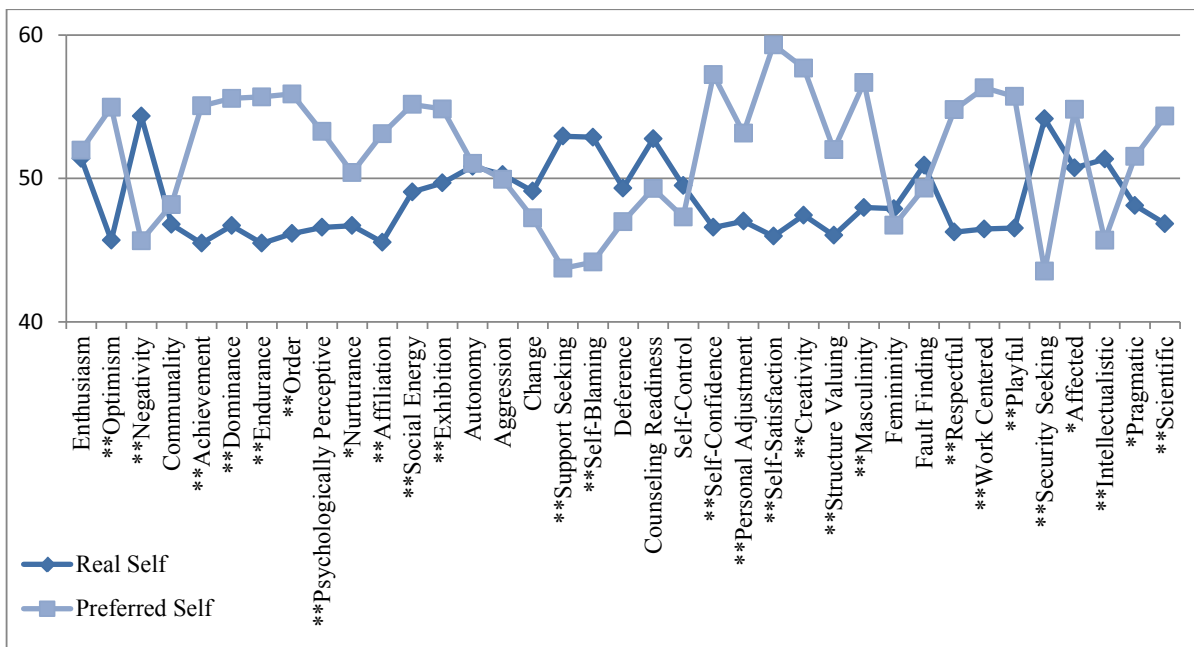


Figure 5. Undergraduate students' personality traits (real/preferred) in phase 2. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

As found in the real self and the preferred self of the postgraduate students, the incongruence in personality traits of the undergraduate students was most obvious in phase 3. Figure 6 exhibits eight strong preferred-self traits (scores of more than 60) including optimism, achievement, dominance, self-confidence, self-satisfaction, creativity, work centered and playful. In contrast, the undergraduate students indicated scores below 40 for two preferred-self traits—support seeking and security seeking—indicating a suppression of the traits. The undergraduate students did not indicate any extreme low scores (less than 30) or extreme high scores (more than 70) in either the real-self or the preferred-self traits in phase 3. The researchers found 26 traits to be significantly different ($p < 0.05$). The five traits that were found to be significantly higher in the real self were the same as in phase 2 (negativity, support seeking, self-blaming, security seeking and intellectualistic). Twenty-one traits were found to be significantly higher in the preferred self: optimistic, achievement, dominance, endurance, order, psychologically perceptive, nurturance, affiliation, social energy, exhibition, self-confidence, personal adjustment, self-satisfaction, creativity, structure valuing, masculinity, respectful, work centered, playful, affected and scientific.

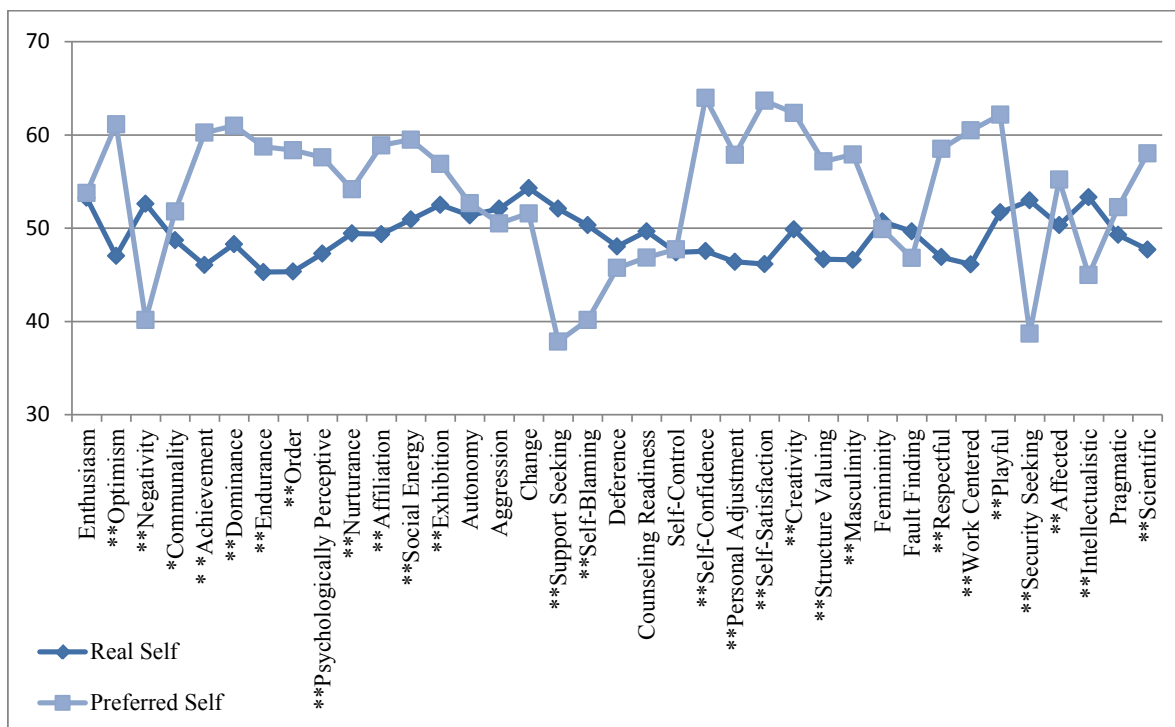


Figure 6. Undergraduate students' personality traits (real/preferred) in phase 3. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

Personality Changes over Phases of the Transitional Period

Real-self personality traits. Postgraduate and undergraduate students did not exhibit extreme real-self personality traits (scores of less than 30 or more than 70) throughout the process of the university's transformation. The researchers performed nonparametric tests to examine changes within the real-self traits of the postgraduate and undergraduate students throughout the three phases of the study (see Figures 8 and 9). As shown in Figures 7 and 8, the researchers found more significant changes within the real-self traits of the postgraduate students compared to those of the undergraduate students. Sixteen real-self traits of the postgraduate students experienced significant changes over the three phases. Among the 16 real-self traits, eight traits (optimism, dominance, social energy, exhibition, self-confidence, structure valuing, masculinity and work centered) increased significantly over the three phases, while two traits (support seeking and self-blaming) decreased significantly over the three phases. Five traits decreased in phase 2, but increased significantly again in phase 3: enthusiasm, change, personal adjustment, creativity and playful. The negativity trait increased during

phase 2 but decreased in phase 3. Despite the significant fluctuation of the postgraduate students' traits, in general, positive traits increased while negative traits decreased. Conversely, the real-self traits of undergraduate students appeared more stable compared to the real-self traits of the postgraduate students (Figure 8). Four real-self traits of undergraduate students experienced significant changes: nurturance, affiliation, playful and intellectualistic. The nurturance and affiliation traits increased significantly over the three phases, whereas the playful and intellectualistic traits decreased significantly during phase 2, but increased again in phase 3.

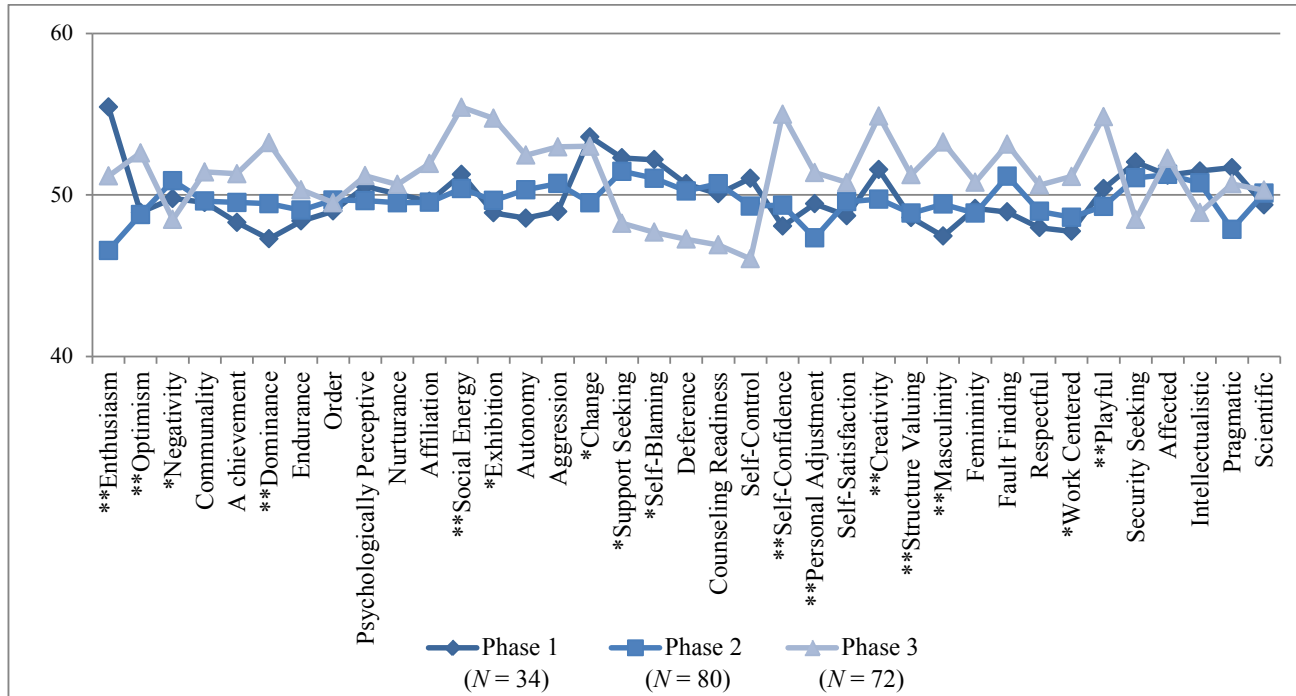


Figure 7. Changes in postgraduate students' real-self personality traits across phases 1, 2 and 3. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

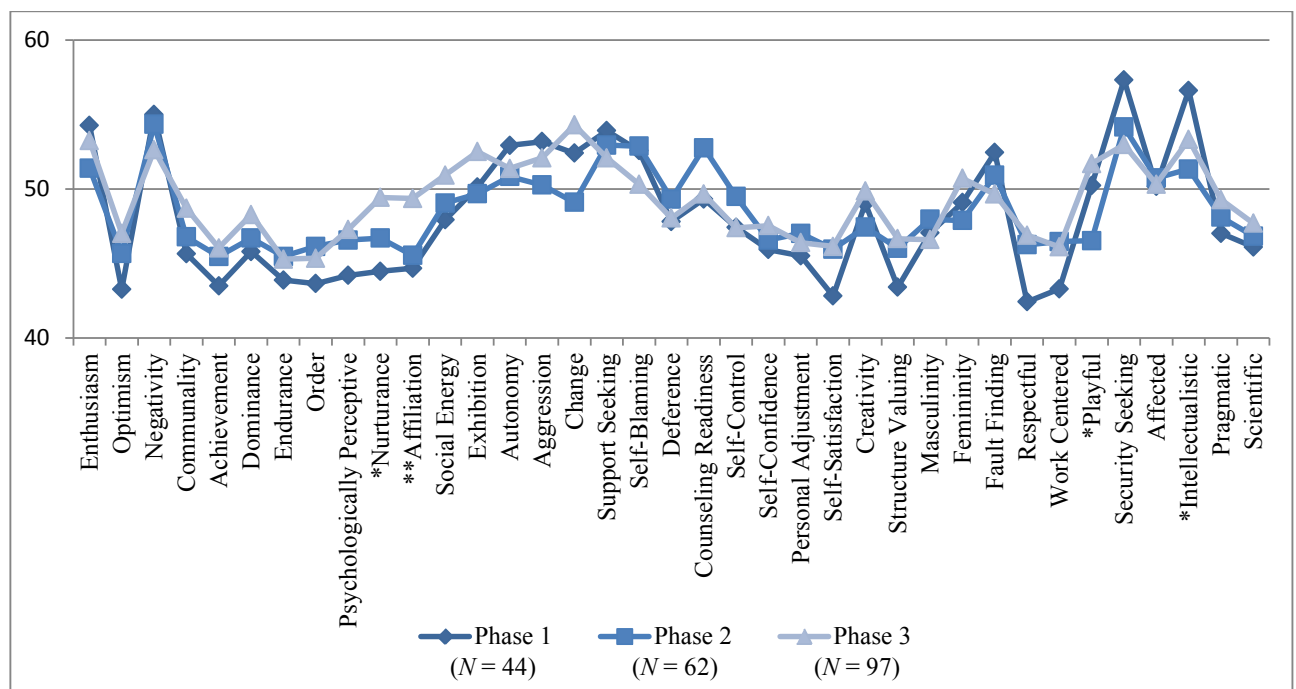


Figure 8. Changes in undergraduate students' real-self personality traits across phases 1, 2 and 3. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

Preferred-self personality traits. As seen in Figures 9 and 10, the preferred-self personality traits of postgraduate and undergraduate students did not fluctuate radically throughout the three phases of the study. However, a greater number of the preferred-self traits of the postgraduate and undergraduate students experienced significant changes than the number of their real-self traits. Figure 9 depicts the comparison of the postgraduate students' preferred-self traits across the three phases. The result of the nonparametric test showed that 27 of the preferred-self traits of the postgraduate students experienced significant changes over the three phases. Among the 27 traits, 13 traits significantly increased over the three phases (optimism, achievement, dominance, endurance, order, social energy, exhibition, self-confidence, self-satisfaction, creativity, masculinity, respectful and work centered), indicating students' desire to be stronger in these traits. Four preferred traits (support seeking, self-blaming, self-control and security seeking) decreased significantly over the three phases. The constant decreases in support seeking and self-control indicate that postgraduate students prefer not to seek advice and emotional support and prefer to be less self-controlled and restrained, and the university ought to pay attention to this finding. In addition, eight preferred-self traits (enthusiasm, psychologically perceptive, nurturance, affiliation, personal adjustment, structure valuing, playful and pragmatic) decreased during phase 2, but increased again in phase 3; two preferred-self traits (negativity and counseling readiness) increased during phase 2, but dropped significantly in phase 3. The drop in counseling readiness in phase 3, which is congruent with the constant decrease in support seeking, requires attention from the university, because this finding indicates that the postgraduate students prefer not to accept counseling or professional advice to help them cope with their personal problems and psychological difficulties.

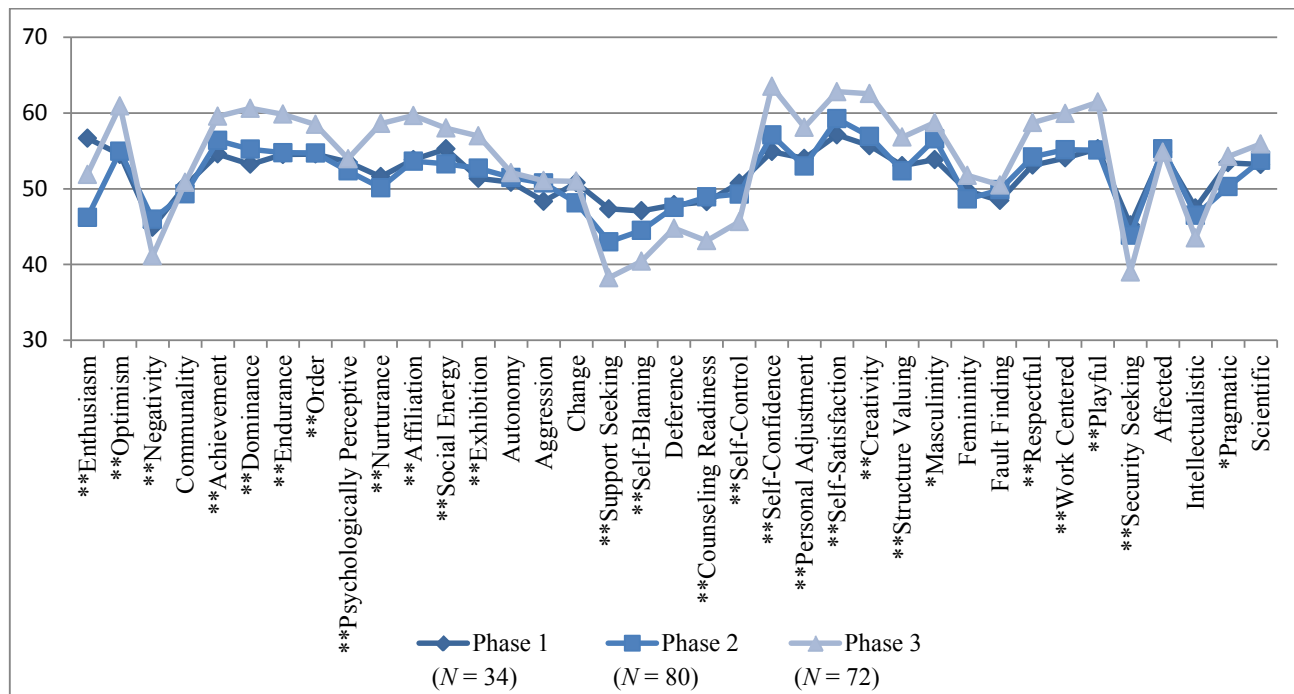


Figure 9. Changes in postgraduate students' preferred-self personality traits across phases 1, 2 and 3.
 * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

As for undergraduate students, 27 preferred-self traits experienced significant changes over the three phases of the study. Fourteen preferred-self traits increased significantly over the three phases of the study: optimism, achievement, dominance, endurance, order, nurturance, affiliation, social energy, exhibition, self-confidence, self-satisfaction, creativity, respectful and work centered, indicating that undergraduate students had a constant

desire to be stronger in these traits. On the other hand, four preferred-self traits decreased over the three phases: support seeking, self-blaming, security seeking and intellectualistic. As mentioned before, the constant decrease in support seeking is concerning because it indicates that students prefer not to seek support and advice when they encounter problems or issues. Undergraduate students showed less desire to be more intellectualistic, suggesting that they prefer not to emphasize versatility, unconventionality and individuality. In addition, eight preferred-self traits decreased during phase 2, but increased again in phase 3 (enthusiasm, communality, psychologically perceptive, change, personal adjustment, structure valuing, playful and scientific), while the negativity trait increased during phase 2 but decreased again in phase 3.

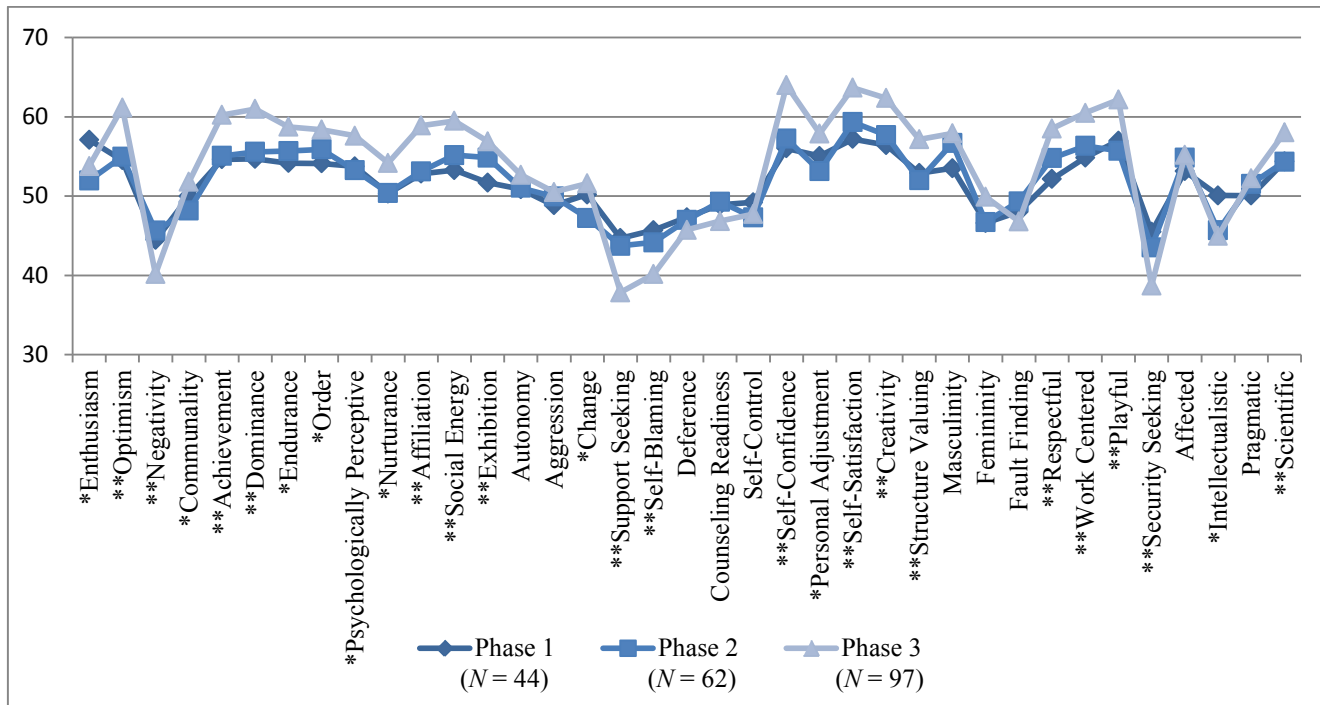


Figure 10. Changes in undergraduate students' preferred-self personality traits across phases 1, 2 and 3.

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

Clearly, postgraduate and undergraduate students shared similar trends in their preferred-self traits (Figures 9 and 10). Both the postgraduate and undergraduate students recorded constant increases in the same 12 preferred traits (optimism, achievement, dominance, endurance, order, social energy, exhibition, self-confidence, self-satisfaction, creativity, respectful and work centered) and constant decreases in three of the preferred-self traits (support seeking, self-blaming and security seeking).

Discussion

Findings on the personality profile of undergraduate and postgraduate students at this research university in Malaysia are promising. The results suggest that students are coping well with the institutional transformation. In fact, personality traits such as optimism, endurance, dominance, order, exhibition, self-confidence and creativity were highly expressed and developed, as profiled in phase 3 of the study. These highly expressed and developed traits indicate that students are dignified, flexible, hopeful and unyielding in their desire to excel. They also value cognitive activity and insight. However, their profile shows some concerns in traits such as support seeking and security seeking, which dropped continuously during the study. Such findings suggest that students may not be ready for counseling and prefer not to seek help and support when they encounter problems.

Because change in an organization may cause strain and uncertainty (Nelson et al., 1995), Marshall (2010) proposed that early assessment and intervention be implemented accordingly. Assessment of students' perceptions of the transformation initiatives, particularly on teaching, learning and research activities, would help to evaluate the impact of institutional transformation on the psychological well-being of the students (Loretto, Platt, & Popham, 2010). Preparing and guiding students through the transformation process helps them to adapt and thrive (Marshall, 2010; Tosevski, Milovancevic, & Gajic, 2010). Loretto et al. (2010) found that preparation for change and timely training with open communication may build trust and minimize uncertainty by increasing control.

Gradual and orderly structural policy changes may facilitate adjustment and minimize needless stressors. Secrecy and poor communication may result in poor morale and low self-satisfaction (Becker et al., 2004; Nelson et al., 1995; Smollan & Sayers, 2009). In contrast, promoting transparency and coordination in the learning environment may encourage attitudes of independence, objectivity, industriousness, respectfulness, confidence, assertiveness, initiative and enthusiasm. These interventions may help ensure the mental well-being of students, which in turn affects their academic achievement positively and contributes toward the success of the university transformation process. Tosevski et al. (2010) have suggested building trust in instructor-student relationships to promote autonomy and clarify role expectations. Practicing a student-driven learning approach may inspire creativity and leadership, bringing forth greater self-satisfaction among students.

As the university moves toward becoming a world-class institution, students fit themselves into the vision and mission of the university. In this study, the differences between the real-self and the preferred-self traits were most exaggerated in the third phase. When the preferred-self traits are much higher than the real-self traits, students may feel frustrated. According to Rogers (2007), incongruence between real and preferred value in personality traits may increase one's vulnerability to stress or anxiety. Mild anxiety brings forth self-awareness in response to the incongruence in personality and may result in therapeutic change and the learning of new coping skills (Rogers, 2007). The university can provide counseling services to assist those students who need help.

Conclusion

The APEX initiative is transforming the selected research university to embrace excellence, innovation and dynamism in moving toward the goal of becoming a world-class institution. The results of this study suggest that university students are coping well with the institutional transformation. In fact, many desired personality traits became more strongly expressed and developed during the transformation phases. It is crucial to continually monitor the personality profile and psychological well-being of students. The institution also can implement proactive interventions to support the mental health and development of human capital in all students.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

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

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The Relationship Between Socioeconomic Status and Counseling Outcomes



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In this study, we examined the relationship between various indices of socioeconomic status (SES) and counseling outcomes among clients at a university counseling center. We also explored links between SES and three factors that are generally regarded as facilitative of client change in counseling: motivation, treatment expectancy and social support. Regression analyses showed that, overall, SES predicted positive changes in symptom checklists over the course of treatment. Individual SES variables predicting positive change were educational attainment and whether the client had health insurance. SES was not associated with motivation, treatment expectancy or social support. Implications for SES research and counseling are discussed.

Keywords: socioeconomic status, counseling outcomes, social support, motivation, treatment expectancy, university counseling center

There is a robust relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and mental health (Goodman & Huang, 2001; Strohschein, 2005), a finding that researchers have consistently replicated (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000; Kraus, Adler, & Chen, 2012; Muntaner, Eaton, Miech, & O'Campo, 2004; von Soest, Bramness, Pedersen, & Wichstrøm, 2012). Furthermore, researchers have linked SES to important outcomes in a number of domains, including academic achievement and employability (Blustein et al., 2002) and health service utilization (Goodman & Huang, 2001). Pope-Davis and Coleman (2001) argued that SES is an important cultural variable that is closely aligned with race and gender. Despite the risk factor that SES poses for mental health and well-being, the current literature does not empirically represent SES as much as other cultural variables, especially with regard to counseling outcome research (Falconnier, 2009; Liu, 2011). To respond to this shortcoming, we investigated potential links between SES and counseling outcome.

SES and Mental Health

SES as a Variable of Study

In the last 20 years, two content analyses have reviewed cultural variables and SES within counseling (Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2004; Pope-Davis, Ligiero, Liang, & Codrington, 2001). Liu et al. (2004) reviewed three journals from 1981–2000 and concluded that SES was mainly studied post hoc, and used primarily to account for unexplained variance. Similarly, focusing on the *Journal of Multicultural Counseling* between the years of 1985 and 1999, Pope-Davis et al. (2001) analyzed the content of articles for prominent multicultural variables and found that SES was underexamined as a primary variable of study. Taken together, both content analyses pointed to an overall lack of attention to SES in mental health counseling literature.

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There is agreement regarding the multicultural and social justice relevance of economic empowerment and SES in the field of counseling (Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis, 2010); however, available SES counseling literature is predominantly conceptual and not empirical. There are several possibilities for the overall lack of empirical investigations into SES and counseling outcomes. First, only recently have mental health counselors made a concerted effort to empirically demonstrate counseling outcomes (Hays, 2010). In addition, Smith, Chambers, and Bratini (2009) opined that, while research on the pathogenic impact of poverty on emotional well-being is robust and logical, the development of practitioner-based interventions has been limited. The counseling profession has not been a leader in empirically studying this complex variable, which further limits the profession's contributions to research-based interventions. Moreover, SES is complex (Liu et al., 2004); its etiology is often interconnected with mental health risk factors. One challenge of SES research, then, is effectively conceptualizing which aspect of the variable to address first. This challenge is best expressed in the old adage "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" In other words, do lower SES levels lead to higher rates of mental health disorders or do higher rates of mental health disorders lead to lower SES levels? Eaton, Muntaner, Bovasso, and Smith (2001) identified four possible answers: (a) Lower SES raises the risk of developing a mental health disorder, (b) lower SES prolongs the duration of a mental health disorder episode, (c) mental health disorders lead to downward social mobility or (d) mental health disorders hinder attainment of upward SES status. It also is plausible that these answers are not mutually exclusive, further complicating the role of SES in mental health.

Objective Versus Subjective Indicators of SES

Another possible reason for the limited pursuit of SES research is the difficulty in operationalizing SES. As a construct, SES is multifaceted, impeding the use of discrete variables (Liu et al., 2004). Frequently it is measured using objective, actuarial data such as household income, occupation, zip code and healthcare coverage. However, Braveman et al. (2005) demonstrated that objective indicators of SES, such as education and income, are inadequate because they are not interchangeable with other SES indicators of wealth, education and neighborhood (e.g., zip code clusters). Braveman et al. (2005) concluded that better measures were needed, especially subjective SES measures, such as perceptions of financial security and broad, culturally driven definitions such as lower-, middle- and upper-class SES levels (Adler et al., 2000; Dennis et al., 2012). Other researchers have reached similar conclusions after using both subjective and objective markers of SES (Adler et al., 2000; Hillerbrand, 1988). Even formal measures of SES, including the Hollingshead's SES indicator (Hollingshead, 2011) and the Duncan Socioeconomic Index (Duncan, 1961), make limited use of subjective measurement strategies. Liu, a leading advocate for the study of SES in counseling, emphasized the need for a multidimensional approach for data collection to best capture contemporary client experiences (Liu, 2011; Liu et al., 2004). In this article, we integrate subjective and objective variables and examine their impact on clinical outcomes.

SES and Clinical Outcomes

In general, psychotherapy reviews show that higher SES is associated with greater therapy retention (Clarkin & Levy, 2004; Petry, Tennen, & Affleck, 2000). However, SES is not consistently related to symptom reduction (Petry et al., 2000). On the other hand, SES does relate to counselor perceptions of the client. For example, in one study at a university counseling center, 163 case files were randomly selected to evaluate the association between the Hollingshead SES rating scale and therapy outcome (Hillerbrand, 1988). According to the results, counselors rated clients with lower SES levels as having greater dysfunction, greater goal disagreement about treatment and less successful counseling outcomes. Mental health practitioners have perceived clients as less motivated when they have lower SES levels (Leeder, 1996) and lack similar social support (Beatty, Kamarck, Matthews, & Shiffman, 2011). In another study, counselors and counselor trainees rated case vignettes and videos of presenting problems featuring clients from either lower or higher SES (Dougall & Schwartz, 2011).

Again, counselors rated lower-SES clients as having more severe problems than higher-SES clients. These results reflect other research investigating perceptions and attitudes about lower-SES populations. Historically, clinicians have tended to view poorer clients as lacking in effort (Feagin, 1975; Kluegel & Smith, 1986) and motivation (Seccombe, James, & Walters, 1998), and as being apathetic and passive (Leeder, 1996). Although these studies provide some useful information regarding the present line of inquiry, studies related to clinical outcome and SES as a main variable of study are sparse (Liu, 2011). There is a need to better refine and understand the relationship between SES and mental health.

Present Study

To address the dearth of counseling outcome studies examining SES, the primary purpose of the present study was to prospectively explore the relationship between SES indicators and counseling outcome. In light of the aforementioned SES literature (e.g., Braveman et al., 2005; Adler et al., 2000), we conceptualized SES as including a combination of objective data and subjective self-perceptions regarding class. Thus, in operationalizing SES as a variable of study, we collected commonly researched objective indices—namely educational attainment, household income and health insurance status, as well as subjective data including client perceptions of financial security and class level.

In the present study, we also examined potential links between SES and three psychological variables thought to facilitate positive change through counseling: client motivation, treatment expectancy and social support. Also of interest was the degree to which the expectation of positive outcome through therapy was linked to SES and counseling outcome. If lower-SES clients indeed fit the perception of increased apathy, we conjectured that these clients would report lower levels of expectation for improvement. Lastly, social support was relevant to this study because it can minimize the impact of lower SES on mental health (Beatty et al., 2011). For example, in a recent study of homeless individuals, social support mediated everyday stressors (Irwin, LaGory, Richey, & Fitzpatrick, 2008). Additionally, Beatty et al. (2011) showed that lower childhood SES was related to less perceived social support. In summary, lower SES level is potentially related to reduced client motivation, treatment expectancy and social support.

Thus, we tested two main hypotheses. First, we hypothesized that lower SES levels were linked to lower levels of client motivation, treatment expectancy and subjective social support. Second, we hypothesized that objective SES variables (e.g., education level, income, health insurance status) and subjective SES variables (e.g., perceived financial security, perceived SES) predicted counseling outcome. Because results have been inconclusive about the primacy of objective versus subjective SES variables, as well as the most predictive combination of SES variables, we entered both sets of predictors into one block of a regression analysis to explore which variables uniquely accounted for variance in outcome. Finally, we tested whether psychological variables (e.g., client motivation, treatment expectancy, social support) explained outcome variance beyond that accounted for by SES variables.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Study participants were adult clients starting counseling at an on-campus university training center. The center, located in a Midwestern suburban area, serves both university students and individuals from surrounding communities at no cost, and is staffed by students enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counseling program.

Between January and April 2010, front desk staff at the training center provided new adult clients with the consent form and study measures, which included the Outcome Questionnaire-45.2 (OQ; Lambert et al., 2003),

one item from the Social Adjustment Scale-Self Report (SAS-SR; Weissman & Bothwell, 1976), the Subjective Social Support (SSS) subscale of the Duke Social Support Index (DSSI; Blazer, Hybels, & Hughes, 1990), the Treatment Expectancy Scale (TES; Sotsky et al., 1991), and numerous demographic questions including gender, race, age, relationship status, reasons for entering counseling, income, educational attainment and health insurance status. Clients who consented to participate completed all forms and returned them to the front desk before beginning their initial counseling session. Participants completed the OQ prior to each subsequent counseling session. The method of asking participants to complete OQs prior to each session offers at least two advantages for outcome researchers (Ogles, Lambert, & Fields, 2002): (a) It reduces confusion over when to administer outcome measures, and (b) it reduces potential data loss from unexpected dropout because the last available measure serves as the posttest (Ogles et al., 2002). In the current study, 54 clients consented to participate and completed an initial OQ, at least one additional OQ (posttest) and the other study measures.

The clients reported coming to counseling to address various personal and career-related issues such as relationship difficulties, anxiety, depression, job loss and career transition. The majority estimated that their presenting concern had lasted on and off for the last few years (38.8%). The ages of the participating clients ranged from 19–79 years old ($M = 38.76$, $SD = 12.41$) and most (61.2%) were female. The majority of the sample described themselves as Caucasian (91.8%) and married/partnered (30.6%). Others reported being unmarried (24.5%), divorced/widowed/separated (22.4%) or dating (22.4%). The majority of the sample reported being employed (65.3%), with 16.3% indicating no job and 18.4% leaving the response blank. One participant was a university student.

Measures

Outcome Questionnaire-45.2. The OQ is a standardized, 45-item self-report instrument that is commonly used as a general “index of mental health” (Lambert et al., 2003, p. 10). The items utilize 5-point Likert scale responses ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (almost always) to determine the severity of various symptoms and psychosocial stressors, resulting in a score ranging from 0–180. Concurrent validity has been established between the OQ Total Score and various other measures of symptomology (e.g., Behavior and Symptom Identification Scale [BASIS-32] Depression and Anxiety subscale; Doerfler, Addis, & Moran, 2002). Construct validity is demonstrated by the OQ’s sensitivity to client change and ability to discriminate between clinical and non-clinical populations (Lambert et al., 2003). The manual (Lambert et al., 2003) reports high internal consistency ($\alpha = .93$) and 10-week test-retest reliability (.66–.86).

Objective SES. Objective SES was operationalized using three indicators: education level, income and health insurance. For education level, participants indicated their educational attainment, with answer choices ranging from 1 (some high school) to 8 (Ph.D. or equivalent). Income level was assessed by asking participants to indicate their yearly household income, with a continuum of choices ranging from 1 (under \$10,000) to 8 (over \$100,000) in \$10,000–\$20,000 increments. Health insurance was dichotomously assessed by asking participants to indicate whether they were receiving health insurance benefits—either through an employer, Medicaid or other source—or were uninsured (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics regarding the SES variables).

Subjective SES. Subjective SES was operationalized using two indicators: perceived financial security and perceived SES. Perceived financial security was measured using one item from the SAS-SR (Weissman & Bothwell, 1976). Participants were asked if they had had enough money for their financial needs in the past 2 weeks. The item was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (I had great financial difficulty) to 5 (I had enough money for needs). Regarding perceived SES, participants were asked to choose “the economic class that best describes you” on a three-point scale corresponding to either 1 (lower), 2 (middle) or 3 (upper economic class). With each subjective variable, we did not analyze differences between financially independent versus dependent clients since only one participant was a university student.

Table 1*Frequencies of Participant Responses for SES Variables (N = 49)*

Variable	M (SD)	%	(n)
Education level	1.80 (1.08)		
1. Did not finish high school		0.0%	(0)
2. High school diploma or equivalent		4.1%	(2)
3. Some college		40.8%	(20)
4. Undergraduate degree		40.8%	(20)
5. In master's program		2.0%	(1)
6. Master's degree		10.2%	(5)
7. In doctoral program		2.0%	(1)
8. Doctoral degree		0.0%	(0)
Income level	4.04 (1.99)		
1. \$0–\$10,000		4.1%	(2)
2. \$10,000–\$20,000		22.4%	(11)
3. \$20,000–\$30,000		26.5%	(13)
4. \$30,000–\$40,000		8.2%	(4)
5. \$40,000–\$60,000		8.2%	(4)
6. \$60,000–\$80,000		18.4%	(9)
7. \$80,000–\$100,000		6.1%	(3)
8. > \$100,000		6.1%	(3)
Health insurance status			
1. Uninsured		46.9%	(23)
2. Insured		53.1%	(26)
Perceived financial security	3.45 (1.57)		
1. Great financial difficulty		20.4%	(10)
2. Usually not enough money		10.2%	(5)
3. Enough money half the time		10.2%	(5)
4. Usually enough money		22.4%	(11)
5. Enough money for needs		36.7%	(18)
Perceived SES	1.73 (0.49)		
1. Lower economic class		28.6%	(14)
2. Middle economic class		69.4%	(34)
3. Upper economic class		2.0%	(1)

Subjective Social Support. Social support was measured using the SSS subscale of the DSSI (Blazer et al., 1990). The SSS consists of 10 items rated on a 3-point scale; for this study, however, a 5-point Likert-type scale was used, resulting in a possible range of 10–50. Prior studies incorporating the 5-point scale have demonstrated enhanced internal consistency compared to the 3-point scale of the original version, and comparable scale correlations indicative of concurrent validity (Leibert, 2010). Items pertain either to the perceived frequency of positive, fulfilling family and peer interactions (1 = none of the time, 5 = all of the time) or to the degree of satisfaction with family and peer relationships (1 = extremely dissatisfied, 5 = extremely satisfied). Internal consistency was good in the present study ($\alpha = .82$).

Client Motivation for Therapy Scale. Motivation, conceptualized using self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), postulates six types of motivation along a continuum from intrinsic to external to no motivation (i.e., amotivation). The 24-item Client Motivation for Therapy Scale (CMOTS; Pelletier, Tuson, & Haddad, 1997) has six 4-item subscales that measure each type of motivation while one is receiving therapy. We were interested in two CMOTS subscales that could be used before counseling began in order to assess pretreatment motivation levels potentially associated with SES variables. Those subscales included identified motivation (e.g., attending counseling “because I would like to make changes to my current situation”) and external motivation (e.g., attending counseling “because other people think that it’s a good idea for me to be in therapy”). Participants rated their reasons for participating in counseling on a 7-point scale (1 = does not correspond at all, 7 = corresponds exactly). A summary score for each subscale was created using its arithmetic mean. The CMOTS was validated on 138 inpatient and outpatient clients seeking help for a variety of mental health concerns (e.g., self-esteem, interpersonal problems; Pelletier et al., 1997). Internal reliability coefficients in the present study were acceptable for identified motivation ($\alpha = .76$) and external motivation ($\alpha = .80$).

Treatment Expectancy Scale. Client expectation for positive treatment outcome was measured using the TES (Sotsky et al., 1991). The TES consists of a single item: “Which of the following best describes your expectations about what is likely to happen as a result of your treatment?”, with responses ranging from “I don’t expect to feel any different” (1) to “I expect to feel completely better” (5). Although reliability data was not reported, the TES was one of the strongest client predictors of outcome in the National Institute of Mental Health Treatment of Depression Collaborative Research Program, a large randomized control trial (Meyer et al., 2002; Sotsky et al., 1991).

Analyses

Data analyses followed the guidelines for outcome research that Ogles et al. (2002) outlined. Primary analyses included correlation and multiple regression techniques, beginning with tests of the assumptions of regression (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). A repeated measures *t* test was used to evaluate pre-post change, and ANCOVAs were used to test the need to include various covariates as control variables in the regression analyses. For each participant, the initial OQ total score was considered the pretest score and the last OQ completed was used as the posttest. Because computing a simple difference score between pretest and posttest is subject to regression to the mean (i.e., highest initial scores change the most), we analyzed outcome by partialing out the OQ pretest scores from OQ posttest scores in the first step of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Hill & Lambert, 2004). Before conducting hypothesis tests, we inspected data for potential violations of univariate and multivariate assumptions in multiple regression analyses, including outliers, atypical scores, multicollinearity and assumptions of linearity, normality and homoscedasticity (Cohen et al., 2003). Five cases showed highly atypical scores according to recommended cutoff guidelines (Cohen et al., 2003) in small data sets (i.e., $DFFITs > 1$) and were removed before hypothesis testing. No further problems were evident.

Initial analyses were conducted to determine whether any demographic variables should be included as covariates in the regression model. Aside from age and length of time in counseling, demographic variables were categorical: gender, marital status (unmarried versus married) and employment status (unemployed versus employed). These variables were dummy coded for the analysis. Separate ANCOVAs were run for the three categorical variables with OQ pretest scores entered as the covariate. The three categorical variables were not significantly related to outcome (*ps* ranged from .29 to .84). A simple regression evaluating age on outcome with OQ pretest scores partialled out showed no significance ($p = .77$). Because the amount of time in counseling may have affected how much change had occurred at posttest, we regressed OQ posttest scores on length of time in counseling, controlling for OQ pretest scores. The regression showed no effect of length of

time in counseling on amount of change ($p = .12$). Therefore, no demographic variables were included in the hierarchical multiple regression.

Results

A repeated measures t test showed that client OQ's significantly improved from pretreatment ($M = 72.6$, $SD = 19.1$) to the final session of counseling ($M = 64.0$, $SD = 20.0$), $t(48) = 5.42$, $p < .001$. To test our first hypothesis that lower SES levels would be linked to lower levels of client motivation, treatment expectancy and subjective social support, we conducted zero-order correlations for continuous variables. Table 2 displays the results, starting with objective SES variables (e.g., education level, income) and subjective SES variables (e.g., perceived financial security, perceived SES), followed by the two indicators of motivation (identified and external), as well as treatment expectancy and social support. For the dichotomously coded objective SES variable, health insurance status, independent samples t tests were conducted on the four dependent variables of identified motivation, external motivation, treatment expectancy and subjective social support. Reported effect sizes adhered to Cohen's (1992) conventions for correlations, with small, medium and large effect sizes corresponding to $r = .10$, $r = .30$, and $r = .50$, respectively.

Table 2

Summary of Intercorrelations for Continuous SES Indicators with Social Support, Treatment Expectancy and Motivation Scores

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Education level	–							
2. Income level	.15	–						
3. Financial security	.31*	.10	–					
4. Perceived SES	.25	.48**	.27	–				
5. Identified motivation	.10	–.05	–.19	–.18	–			
6. External motivation	–.11	–.01	–.13	–.08	–.11	–		
7. Treatment expectancy	.01	–.17	.27	–.22	.14	.19	–	
8. Social support	.21	.00	.40**	–.03	.08	–.08	.14	–

Note. $N = 49$; financial security = perceived financial security; social support = Subjective Social Support; treatment expectancy = Treatment Expectancy Scale. Health insurance status is a categorical variable and is not included in this table.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

As shown in Table 2, neither of the continuous objective SES variables (e.g., educational attainment, income level) significantly related to identified motivation, external motivation, treatment expectancy or subjective social support. The independent samples t tests indicated no significant effect regarding insurance status ($p > .05$). The subjective SES variable, perceived financial security, significantly and positively correlated with subjective social support ($r = .40$, $p < .01$), with a medium to large effect size. Consistent with our hypothesis, clients who reported feeling more secure financially also felt more supported by their social network;

conversely, clients feeling less supported by their social network felt less secure financially. The other subjective SES variable, perceived SES, did not significantly correlate with motivation, treatment expectancy or subjective social support. Therefore, the overall pattern of findings did not support the first hypothesis.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

We used hierarchical multiple regression to test the second hypothesis that objective SES variables (e.g., education level, income, health insurance status) and subjective SES variables (e.g., perceived financial security, perceived SES) predicted counseling outcome. In the first step of the hierarchy, we entered OQ pretest scores to control for initial differences in symptoms. In the second step, we entered objective and subjective SES variables. In the third step, we entered psychological variables (subjective social support, treatment expectancy and client motivation) to test whether these variables accounted for additional outcome variance beyond that which SES variables explained. Because we did not have hypotheses about the primacy of specific individual variables' effects on counseling outcome, we examined semipartial correlations (r_{sp}) to identify which predictors within each step had the greatest impact on outcome.

Results of the hierarchical regression analysis appear in Table 3. Controlling for OQ pretest scores in the first step, results supported the hypothesis that SES variables significantly predicted counseling outcome, $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $F(5, 42) = 2.93$, $p < .05$, a small to medium size effect. Taking into account the other predictors, the following two of the six SES variables significantly predicted outcome: education level and health insurance status. The semipartial correlations indicated that education level and health insurance status accounted for 3% and 4% of outcome variance, respectively, small to medium effect sizes. The beta coefficient for education indicated that for every unit increase in education, clients had, on average, a 3.6-point reduction in their final OQ scores relative to their initial level ($t = -2.49$, $p < .05$). Similarly, clients who had health insurance reported an average 8.7 OQ points greater positive change than those who did not have insurance ($t = -2.60$, $p < .05$).

Table 3

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting OQ Posttest Score

Predictor	r_{sp}	B	SE B	β	R^2	F	df
Baseline – OQ pretest	.84**	0.88	0.08	0.84	0.70	111.2	1, 47
Model 1					ΔR^2 .08	ΔF 2.93**	5, 42
Education level	-.18*	-.63	1.46	-.20			
Income	.12	1.54	0.93	.05			
Health insurance	-.19*	-8.67	3.34	-.22			
Financial security	-.01	-0.12	1.05	-.01			
Perceived SES	-.01	-0.36	3.58	-.01			
Model 2					.02	0.90	5, 37
Social support	.01	0.71	4.22	.02			
Treatment expectancy	-.10	-3.30	2.47	-.12			
Identified regulation	-.06	-3.22	3.84	-.07			
External motivation	.13	4.06	2.28	.16			
Amotivation	-.09	-3.42	2.79	-.13			

Note. r_{sp} = semipartial correlation coefficient. Initial covariate in the first step was Outcome Questionnaire-45 pretest score. Negative signs indicate lower posttreatment symptoms. OQ = Outcome Questionnaire-45; financial security = perceived financial security; perceived SES = perceived socioeconomic status; social support = Subjective Social Support; treatment expectancy = Treatment Expectancy Scale; health insurance = Health Insurance Status; coding: no = 0, yes = 1.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

In the third step of the regression, after controlling for both OQ pretest scores and SES variables, the psychological variables (subjective social support, treatment expectancy and client motivation) did not predict significantly more variance in outcome, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F(5, 37) = 0.90$, $p > .05$.

Discussion

Overall, SES variables significantly predicted counseling outcome. In particular, two of the objective SES variables—education level and health insurance status—each individually predicted greater improvement in counseling, explaining 3% and 4% of the outcome variance, respectively. Contrary to expectations, income level and the subjective SES variables did not predict outcome. Overall, our hypothesis that SES variables would relate to social support, treatment expectancy and motivation was not supported. However, the subjective SES variable—perceived financial security—significantly and positively related to subjective social support.

Surprisingly, as a whole, SES variables did not correlate with clients' subjective sense of social support. The only exception was a significant positive link between subjective social support and perceived financial security. It may be that the perception of having sufficient funds to meet recent individual or family needs aligns with the perception of having a supportive social network. However, the finding that income level did not correlate with social support was interesting given the common perception among mental health workers that low-income clients lack social support (Krause & Borawski-Clark, 1995). In this study, from the perspectives of lower-income clients, there were no perceptions of support system deficits. The degree and frequency with which one experiences positive interactions with peers is the basis of the SSS instrument. Within SES research, social support measures may include community social support, as well as family and peers. The definition of social support may differ from participant to participant. One of the challenges of social support within SES is that lower-SES individuals often experience similar increased economic stressors to others in their social support network (Mickelson & Kubzansky, 2003). Therefore, a more limited study using multiple social support measures is a possible direction for future research.

Though the first hypothesis was not supported, the results indicate a trend in the hypothesized direction, with higher perceived financial security being marginally related to treatment expectancy, accounting for 7% of the variance, a medium-sized effect. In other words, before counseling began, clients who reported a greater sense of financial security also had greater expectation of a positive treatment outcome. There was, however, no significant relationship between all other SES indicators and either motivation type. Given that this hypothesis was based on studies of perceptions among mental health professionals working with low-income clients (e.g., Dougall & Schwartz, 2011; Hillerbrand, 1988; Krause & Borawski-Clark, 1995; Leeder, 1996; Seccombe et al., 1998), it is possible that the findings are indicative of SES-related biases in the helping professions. That is, the overall findings of the present study did not reveal significant relationships between SES and social support, treatment expectancy or client motivation, even though clinicians have frequently reported beliefs that such relationships exist.

Of the three objective SES variables, education level and health insurance status each predicted greater improvement in counseling. Education level is commonly used in poverty research, which shows that lower education is associated with decreased physical and mental health. For example, Goodman, Slap, and Huang (2003) found that lower household income and parental education were associated with depression and obesity. Similarly, SES studies using neighborhood indices such as zip code or concentrated populations with similar income levels often find lower-income communities facing challenges such as lack of quality education, lower education levels and fewer employment opportunities, with these chronic stressors impacting depressive symptoms (Groh, 2007).

The second finding of health insurance status contributing to improvements through counseling is particularly intriguing given that counseling services in the present study were offered at no cost. Arguably, access to health insurance provided a safety net, a positive external resource that allowed low- and high-income clients alike to focus on the internal work of change in counseling. That is, health insurance fulfilled a basic need, which in turn seemed to aid clients in benefiting from counseling. This finding is important given the recent attempts to obtain mental health parity. The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (2008) was passed in an effort to reduce costs of mental health services by offering treatment continuously. Recent research highlights the political and societal complexity of mental health parity (Hernandez & Uggen, 2012). Within counseling, there is a lack of research focused on client outcomes and perceptions of healthcare. And in the present study, the finding of a relationship between perceptions of healthcare and outcomes was unexpected. Outside the counseling literature, recent studies focused on parity at the macro level have found disconnects between providers and consumers related to education. In a 2009 study in California, many consumers stated a need for increased education about parity (Rosenbach, Lake, Williams, & Buck, 2009). The current research direction focuses more on utilization and access issues and less on the impact on outcomes. The implications for counselors lie in the ability to provide individuals with easy access to mental healthcare and to reduce or remove the stigmatization often associated with receiving mental health services. Furthermore, current research suggests the need for service providers to educate clients on mental healthcare options. The myriad of choices, rules and requirements can be overwhelming for clients already experiencing elevated distress. In conclusion, counselors benefit the profession by advocating for clients and not being silent stakeholders. Further research is necessary to understand this finding and its implications for policy and service provisions.

The present results show that subjective and objective measures collectively predicted outcomes. Within the counseling literature, there are few studies that both empirically study subjective and objective measures, as well as examine SES measures with clinical outcomes in counseling. The results also support the premise that SES is a complex variable warranting further empirical inquiry in counseling research (Liu, 2011). If SES is predictive of client outcomes in a counseling training program, then further research to investigate discrete variables and causal relationships is necessary. Current trends in SES health research involve the inclusion of subjective measures. Studies have shown that subjective low SES is linked to poorer health outcomes (Adler et al., 2000). Professional counselors can both emulate the current health research already using both subjective and objective measures in clinical outcomes and forge their own SES research agenda.

Limitations

Several methodological limitations warrant attention. First, the small sample size, comprised mostly of Caucasian and female clients, limits the generalizability of this study. Given that SES is linked with race and gender (Pope-Davis & Coleman, 2001), a heterogeneous sample would enrich the study's findings. Along those lines, it is conceivable that the health insurance–outcome link in this study was a spurious correlation that might be accounted for by a third unmeasured variable. In short, the sample of convenience and the naturalistic correlational design reduces internal validity. Though each counselor had similar coursework prior to practicum, counselor trainees were not the same. We made no attempt to control variables such as counseling approach, counselor competence or client diagnosis; each of these variables may have changed the results of this study. Finally, a possible confounding contextual factor was that this study occurred within a time of significant economic challenge. Similar to mandated healthcare and parity, the economic contexts in which SES studies occur are important areas for further study. Despite these limitations, the study provides important contributions and has implications for further research.

Implications and Future Research

The results of the present study are consistent with the work of researchers who have argued that SES variables have complex relationships with one another and with mental health (Liu, 2011). When measured together, subjective and objective SES measures impacted clinical outcomes. As individual variables, however, only educational level and health insurance status predicted improved outcome. Indices of SES have not evolved to the point that they can be measured with discrete variables. Counseling SES research would benefit from further development of SES indices, as well as comprehensive studies using measures as a whole within broader contextual issues to fully understand the utility in mental health counseling research.

Results also show that clients who had access to health insurance experienced greater amelioration of symptoms even though counseling services in the present study were provided at no cost. This result was unexpected and must be studied further. Future research might examine whether access to insurance satisfies a basic need of security, which, in turn, improves counseling outcomes. Increasingly, states are incorporating mental health parity (Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, 2008); therefore, studies must review the long-term effects associated with clinical outcomes and cost-effectiveness. Regarding short-term findings, Lang (2013) found that suicide rates were significantly reduced when states required parity between physical and mental health benefits. Also, studies controlling for counselor and client differences are needed. For example, an experimental design might examine counselor countertransference regarding lower-SES clients. Results might show how much counselor perceptions could be altered on the one hand, and biased on the other. This study also indicates a further need for counselors to understand the contextual influences of SES with regard to counseling outcome. It is important for counselors to embody the full characteristics of their professional identity—including that of mental health advocate—to address SES issues involving both misconceptions and gaps in SES research.

Conclusion

The present study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding the effect of client SES on counseling outcome. Results show that higher education and access to health insurance—even at a free counseling clinic—may improve counseling outcome. For all clients, possession of health insurance augmented the amount of improvement. Although these findings should be regarded as tentative, SES appears to be an important client variable affecting the success of counseling and meriting further research. The results also underscore the need for a comprehensive SES measure to gain a more complete picture of how SES influences counseling outcome. Finally, we found no links between lower SES levels and motivation, treatment expectancy and perceived social support. An important implication for the practicing counselor is to value the nuances of SES as potential influences on client outcome. Counselors would benefit from exploring potential SES stressors with clients and accessible resources to minimize mental health stressors and improve counseling outcomes.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

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

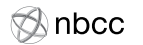
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Small but Mighty: Perspectives of Rural Mental Health Counselors



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Limited research is available on the experiences of rural mental health counselors. The following is a phenomenological study grounded in critical theory. Four practicing licensed professional counselors currently working in rural settings in the Midwest region of the United States were interviewed to elicit stories regarding rural counseling, supervision and professional development experiences. The participants' responses included the following themes: (a) need for flexibility, (b) resource availability, (c) isolation, (d) ethical dilemmas and (e) finding meaning in one's work. The results contribute to a small but growing body of research about rural counselors, who are often misunderstood in the context of mental health.

Keywords: rural counseling, rural mental health, ethical dilemmas, phenomenological, professional development

No common culture for the rural United States is absolute. Rural communities range according to geographic location, diversity of inhabitants, social and economic factors, problems and resources available (Bushy & Carty, 1994). As such, counselors-in-training often lack critical background information to competently and ethically serve traditionally underserved clientele (Smalley et al., 2010); in addition, counselors often lack the professionalism necessary for dealing with the profusion of unique issues in rural settings. Authors have documented studies related to rural school counseling, rural marriage and family therapy, rural mental health practitioners, rural clinical psychology, and rural healthcare and education (Bambling et al., 2007; Boyd et al., 2007; Curtin & Hargrove, 2010; Curtis, Waters, & Brindis, 2011; Ellis, Konrad, Thomas, & Morrissey, 2009; Endacott et al., 2006; Hartley, Loux, Gale, Lambert, & Yousefian, 2010; Lockhart, 2006; McCord et al., 2011; Morris, 2006; Murry, Heflinger, Suiter, & Brody, 2011; Owens, Richerson, Murphy, Jagelewski, & Rossi, 2007; Smalley et al., 2010). There is a noticeable gap in the literature, however, related to rural mental health counseling experiences.

The many definitions of *rural* reflect the complexity and dynamism of this elusive concept. In one scenario, population density may be the focus of the definition, whereas in other cases, geographic isolation may take precedence. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau (2013) uses the urban-rural classification system to distinguish between two types of urban areas: (a) urban communities of 50,000 or more people and (b) urban clusters of between 2,500 and 50,000 people. *Rural* thereby encompasses all population, housing and territory not included within an urban area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). However, the U.S. Department of Agriculture uses a regional-economic concept as defined by the Office of Management and Budget, which distinguishes metropolitan areas as broad labor-market areas that include (a) central counties with one or more urbanized areas (densely populated areas with more than 50,000 people), and (b) outlying counties that are economically tied to the core counties as evidenced by labor-force commuting (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2013). Nonmetropolitan areas are therefore those outside these metropolitan areas (U.S. Department of Agriculture,

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2013). For the purposes of this article, *rural* is defined according to the Office of Management and Budget geographic isolation definition, with rural counties constituting those with fewer than 50,000 people as well as counties not economically tied to densely populated counties.

Bushy and Carty (1994) authored one of two articles specifically devoted to rural mental health counseling. The authors provided a solid foundation of rural mental health considerations, outlining the availability, accessibility and acceptability of services. The authors also described rural culture and its intersection with mental health, stating that utilization patterns are typically characterized by informal support systems versus social services. When rural residents do seek help, it is often because of crisis with higher associated incidents of depression, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse and neglect.

Erickson (2001) defined the multiple relationships inherent in rural counseling. She explored various problems with regard to dual relationships in rural settings, as well as an ethical decision-making model for use in such instances. Through a case study, Erickson applied her decision-making model and promoted adherence to ethical guidelines in spite of multiple relationship occurrence.

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) provides accreditation standards for licensed professional counselors. With CACREP as the industry hallmark for promoting competence through properly trained counselors, practitioners and leaders in the mental health field must take note of the lack of research and training for rural mental health counselors. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to identify the counseling experiences of licensed professional counselors working in rural settings in the Midwest region of the United States. From a critical theory perspective, this study asked the global question, “What is the experience of rural mental health counselors?” Three subquestions included the following: (a) How does the experience of working in a rural setting impact the counselor’s roles? (b) What are the contextual factors impacting counseling supervision in rural areas? and (c) What is the essence of the professional development of supervisors and supervisees providing counseling services in rural areas?

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited via network selection or “snowballing” (Creswell, 2007), in which participants and other field contacts make referrals for participation. Participants were four women who met the following research criteria: They were licensed professional counselors (LPC) currently working in the counseling field in a rural setting as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (2013). Participants lived in the Midwest region of the United States at the time of the interviews, recruited from Nebraska and South Dakota. All four women were Caucasian; three were in their mid-30s and one was in her mid-50s. Each participant’s amount of experience at her current work setting fell between 2 months and 10 years. Two participants had additional credentials in either art or equine-assisted therapy (see Table 1 for a demographic summarization of participants).

Procedure

The author and other doctoral students participating in a graduate-level qualitative research course developed 13 interview questions. Interviews were based on research questions and semistructured, allowing for both interviewees and the interviewer to spontaneously elaborate and provide further questions and information when necessary. The author conducted the interviews face-to-face with three participants; she conducted the fourth interview over the phone. The author used two digital recorders to audiotape all four interviews, which

ranged in length from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. The author also conducted transcription of the audiotapes. She stored data in a locked drawer to ensure participant confidentiality, and used coding for participant identification to further protect anonymity. Prior to investigation, the author wrote an epoch (Moustakas, 1994) in which she identified her own experiences with rural culture in order to suspend previous understandings and to gain a fresh perspective. Such bracketing of the author's experiences was used during and after the interviews and data analysis to further assess for and reduce potential bias.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Credentials	CACREP	Years in field	Current setting	Years at current setting
Super Nanny	35	LPC, Equine-assisted therapy	No	2	Home-based, community health	.16
The Pastor's Wife	36	LPC	Yes	10	Children's services, outpatient	5.5
Putting Out Fires	34	LPC, Art therapy	No	10.66	Outpatient, American Indian reservation	2.33
All Things Rural	56	LPC	Yes	10	Nonprofit, outpatient	10

Analysis

The author first read all transcripts in order to become familiar with the data, and then read the transcripts a second time with a subsequent data analysis, following the phenomenological approach that Creswell prescribed (2007). The current author categorized individual statements into specific codes closely resembling the participants' statements. She clustered the codes according to their subject, with similar codes combined into units of meaning in order to better manage the data, and then she labeled each unit of meaning in a theme. From key sentiments that each participant expressed, the author developed a pseudonym to reflect her unique perspectives. Using member checking (Creswell, 2007), the author restated and summarized information, and then questioned each participant to determine accuracy throughout the interview. The author emailed both transcripts of the interviews and analyzed data to the participants so each could either agree or disagree that her experiences, views and feelings were represented accurately and completely. The author additionally utilized peer and expert audit reviews (including her doctoral classmates and class instructor) to ensure credibility of the overall findings.

Results

The author identified the following themes: (a) need for flexibility, (b) resource availability, (c) isolation, (d) ethical dilemmas and (e) finding meaning in one's work.

Need for Flexibility

One of the dominant themes of the interviews was the need for rural mental health counselors to be flexible. All participants noted having to be flexible in order to accommodate changing schedules, multiple roles and

responsibilities, working in a variety of different settings, and driving long distances. For example, The Pastor's Wife explained her struggle with flexibility when she is in a town only once a week: "Scheduling is hard. . . . And so if a kid can only be seen after school . . . at a certain time . . . I'm only in [town] one day a week. That's a challenge."

Super Nanny explained driving as part of rural life: "I mean, where I grew up, you just have to drive everywhere. To get groceries, to get a job, you have to drive at least half an hour." For this participant, it was therefore not challenging to commute: "It's about an hour drive from my home to visit with my supervisor." Putting Out Fires, on the other hand, described struggles with driving: "The hardest part for me is the drive. I drive 45 minutes one way. I just hate that. For me, that's the most frustrating." The Pastor's Wife had a different problem with driving: "The thing that gets me . . . is cost. . . . It costs a lot for travel. . . . With budget cuts, they cut back on that kind of stuff. So, to get creative, [I] carpool to different trainings."

To help close the distance typically found in rural areas, participants met with clientele in a variety of untraditional settings to lessen the physical gap between counselors' offices and clients' homes. Settings included town libraries, churches, schools and funeral homes. Putting Out Fires candidly remarked, "I even go to their work. It's approved by their boss that I meet them. I do that every week." Even in her office space located in a church, All Things Rural must be flexible with the comings and goings of congregation members.

We're very respectful of the church people and they are very respectful of us. If they know we have something going on, they stay away. Like [if] we have someone in the family room, they'll go somewhere else. It's wonderful.

In addition to juggling different settings, participants juggled many roles in their positions as well. Whether it was the role of teacher, case manager, secretary, grant writer, administrator, supervisor or advocate, all four participants acknowledged that an essential part of being a rural counselor entailed wearing many hats. All Things Rural commented, "So, we do everything: phones, insurance, make our own appointments, case notes. We make our own grants. It is very all encompassing." Similarly, Putting Out Fires admitted, "I do trainings with the pre-natal classes. . . . I do a lot of community activities. I do a lot of prevention. [When] they have community activities, like National AIDS Awareness Day, we'll have a booth." Of course, Super Nanny described her teaching responsibilities accordingly: "I do a lot of Super Nanny type stuff . . . a lot of hands on, experiential, teaching type stuff. Like taking advantage of teachable moments. So I'm teaching."

Flexibility also resulted in fewer people doing more jobs in the community as a whole. For example, doubling of other roles also occurred. All Things Rural explained, "The church secretary also double-times as our treasurer." Putting Out Fires echoed a similar example: "They were without a social worker for a while. So they had a nurse trying." And if roles are not filled, then it is the community that must go without.

Resources

Another dominant theme was resources in rural communities. All Things Rural described the affordability of counseling for community members: "We can see people who for any reason aren't having their mental health or counseling needs met, we never refuse anyone for inability to pay." Putting Out Fires mentioned the availability of transportation for clients: "I really do not have very many no-shows because we provide transportation. So we even go to the houses and pick them up." For those individuals initiating services, culturally diverse staff is available, according to Super Nanny:

At the agency that I work, they have at least two licensed therapists that, one of them is actually from Somalia and the other one is kind of like an expert in that area . . . really knows a lot of the culture

and all that stuff. . . . I'm impressed with that in where I'm working now. There's also a large Hispanic culture and at least half of all the staff, the family service workers, as well as the therapists, are bilingual.

Despite being in rural locations, participants had access to other professionals and trainings. One of the benefits of working for an American Indian/Native Alaska tribe, confided Putting Out Fires, was that "there's lots of funds. When it comes to CEUs [continuing education units], trainings, I am very spoiled. They pay for all of that. That's a huge benefit. It's huge." Although the other participants did not have comparable financial backing for professional development, The Pastor's Wife commented on local trainings: "I think that there are some local things that are available. There's been some . . . workshops at the hospital . . . which has been nice. And they're free. So that's good." All Things Rural similarly described a local conference: "Here in [town] there is an annual Mental Wellness Conference."

All four participants identified local availability for interacting with other rural mental health counselors. Whether through staff meetings, informal office drop-ins or contact with other area personnel, all have been able to find resources nearby. All Things Rural stated, "I always have people I can talk to." Super Nanny described a similar experience: "And then . . . if I don't know about something, I access the person that does within the agency." Furthermore, the Internet has proven helpful for participants when asking questions over e-mail, finding information or materials online, or utilizing telesupervision. Putting Out Fires explained, "The big thing now is telesupervision. And even using Skype. I actually went to a seminar at the last art therapy conference, and it was all about telesupervision. Because I even had supervised somebody through Skype."

On the other hand, participants also had experiences where wait lists formed due to high need and not enough local professional staff available. The Pastor's Wife said, "I'm the only QMHP [qualified mental health professional] in [town] on Fridays." Putting Out Fires also complained about the lack of professionally qualified area staff: "Their CPS [Child Protective Services] workers don't have to have a college education. . . . I'm not sure what their requirements are. So they may not necessarily even be trained."

Because there are few professionals serving a small population, there is often a lack of clinician anonymity. Super Nanny described the challenge of maintaining a private life while out in public: "Is it somebody I'm working with? Is it somebody I'm going to work with possibly in the future? . . . What are they seeing? What opinions are they forming?" Super Nanny expressed similar concern: "It's just [that you're] always having to represent yourself in a professional manner whether you're at work or not at work." All Things Rural summarized, "You run into your clients more in a rural setting than you would otherwise."

Isolation

Not surprisingly, another aspect of being a rural counselor involved experiences with wide, open spaces. The Pastor's Wife elaborated on the complications as a result of unavailable cell signals:

If I have a question, or something, and I need to call back, at times there's trouble with reception. . . . Like down in [town] . . . you have to go to . . . the top of this hill to get cell reception. . . . In somebody's house, there's no cell reception.

Super Nanny struggled with a different piece:

I miss the office interaction, though. That's where you do a lot of the collaborating. A lot of consultation . . . a lot of ideas are generated. "I'm struggling with a client, what do you do?" Just, you know, passing in the hall. Or, when you have a 10-minute break and you're in someone else's office. "I've got a quick question for you. I'm struggling with . . . What advice do you have?" I miss that.

Ethical Dilemmas

Dual relationships abound in rural communities. Putting Out Fires explained, “It’s so small in the community, you become friends, then . . . you see their kid.” She further detailed, “And we don’t have an EAP [Employee Assistance] program. So we’ve seen co-workers. That’s really hard.” The Pastor’s Wife added, “And also I see a few of the kids of staff, of my co-workers. . . . I haven’t had any issues, but it’s . . . a whole different situation I guess. Because you’re coworkers and a client.” The Pastor’s Wife also explained the intersection of her personal and professional lives:

Well, I’ve run into some difficulties with my husband being a pastor at the church. . . . I’ve had some clients that have also been parishioners, and so with the confidentiality, I can’t talk to my husband about things. But he also has confidentiality about things, being a pastor. And he can’t talk to me about things. But there have been times that I’ve been on-call, and he has gotten a call from a parishioner, that he has had to encourage to call the crisis line, then I answer the crisis line. And it’s just . . . it hasn’t caused any problems, but the uncomfortableness [*sic*] is there. And, so that has been difficult at times.

In addition to dual relationships, participants cited concerns regarding other rural professionals’ multicultural competency. The Pastor’s Wife described several colleagues’ biases:

I know that there is natural stereotypes, of you know, this kid’s a Native American kid versus a White kid. So the Native American kid is gonna be, you know, have more problem behaviors. I think there’s stereotypes for sure.

Putting Out Fires had a similar experience: “The thing that is really frustrating . . . there are teachers in the schools that are really racist.” In addition to advocating for clients while on the job, she stresses the importance of doing so while interacting with family and friends. Putting Out Fires explains, “Oh, I say stuff” to combat stereotypes and injustices.

Finding Meaning in One’s Work

In spite of the obstacles of rural mental health counseling, all four participants identified sources of job satisfaction. Putting Out Fires remarked about her American Indian clients, “They’re so resilient. And you know, they’re strong. They adapt to the circumstances.” The Pastor’s Wife reflected on her multiple responsibilities by saying, “There’s some benefits in working in rural areas, too. I think . . . it can be more rewarding because you feel you’re doing more. You have to.” Super Nanny was proud to be giving back to her childhood community: “I feel that it’s very rewarding to work in the communities . . . that I grew up in and to be able to actually help the people I work with.” Super Nanny also added the following:

And within small communities, the chances that I’m going to run into them in the future are very high. . . . And I have had that experience where I do run into people from the past and I see them doing very well . . . to me [this] is very rewarding.

All Things Rural stated, “We have a wonderful staff and we’re very happy.” To reiterate, she said, “I love my work. I love my work.” All Things Rural summarized her rural mental health counseling experiences by saying, “We are small, but mighty.”

Discussion

This study demonstrates many aspects of rural mental health counseling and answers the research question related to rural counselors' various roles and supervision and professional development experiences. Given the extra roles that participants take on and the multiple settings in which they practice, the findings of this study are similar to those of Bushy and Carty (1994). This study further highlights the ambiguous nature of availability and accessibility of rural mental health resources. In some instances, participants described ample collegial accessibility. Putting Out Fires said, "I feel supervision-wise, I get a lot of good support." All Things Rural concurred: "I know a lot of my colleagues in the area. And that's helpful." In other instances, participants bemoaned a lack of resources. Putting Out Fires replied, "You have to work your butt off. We have scraped. We have scraped." Super Nanny responded, "They're there. You just have to look for them." With such contradictions occurring within the context of the four interviews, the complexity of rural mental health counseling is apparent. Hard work is expected. Putting Out Fires explained, "If you're going to be successful, you're going to have to work at it."

By using a qualitative design, the author was able to gain insight into the nature of rural mental health counseling experiences that she could not study easily through quantitative methods. Allowing participants to speak candidly about their experiences in a semistructured interview format provided an increased understanding of rural mental health counseling experiences, supervision and professional development. The participants also represented a variety of service venues, including outpatient services on an American Indian reservation.

One limitation of the study relates to the questionable reliability of self-reports. Some participants may have felt political or internal pressure to portray their geographic location or job in a positive light. The author's presence during data collection may similarly have impacted participants' responses. An obvious limitation is the narrow demographic representation and sample size. Although the participants represented a variety of community mental health settings, all the participants were Caucasian females. Having more substantive demographic differences (e.g., age, race, gender, years in the field) and a larger sample size could have further enriched the findings.

Implications for Clinical Practice, Counselor Education and Future Research

It remains clear that certain personal qualities and professional skills can lead to increased rural mental health job satisfaction and success. For example, knowing how to adapt to ever-changing situations, be they role or setting related, is important. Whether being prepared to help a community sandbag for an approaching flood, anticipating loss of cell phone reception or writing one's own grants, flexibility becomes key. As All Things Rural said, "You just have to be very versatile."

The current study reinforced findings from previous rural mental health research. Working in isolation is a hard truth for rural mental health counselors (Curtin & Hargrove, 2010). All Things Rural said, "Smaller communities . . . don't have services." The Pastor's Wife expanded on the dilemma: "And the resources out there are even . . . less than here, so it was really important to have those credentials." Obtaining additional credentials may not only help advance one's career goals, but in rural mental health counseling, it can become a function of survival.

Smalley et al. (2010) further suggested anticipation of ethical dilemmas. Participants in this study recognized the coping skills necessary for dealing with concerns surrounding confidentiality, dual relationships and

discrimination. Super Nanny used deflection and planned ignoring. All Things Rural used humor. Putting Out Fires and The Pastor's Wife used limit setting. While Curtin and Hargrove (2010) promoted overall administrative and supervisory support for rural mental health professionals, it is the current author's belief that such encouragement can prove additionally important regarding ethical concerns. Furthermore, Endacott et al. (2006) advocated that licensing boards differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable boundary crossings for rural mental health counselors and develop corresponding guidelines for protection when such occurrences happen.

Bushy and Carty (1994) found limited training regarding rural mental health practice. Inevitably, counseling training programs have an urban orientation toward the counseling profession (Bushy & Carty, 1994). Ellis et al. (2009) recommend specialized training to meet the unique needs of rural mental health counselors. Training areas of particular importance include telesupervision, social justice advocacy, and managing inevitable dual relationships and breaches in confidentiality.

In light of this study's findings, optimism remains for this growing area of mental health counseling. All four participants were able to glean meaning despite extra responsibilities, isolation, ethical hardships and unavailable resources. It is clear these four rural mental health counselors are able to transcend tremendous obstacles. Indeed, "small but mighty" is a fitting description for this specialized group of mental health professionals.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

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