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Ageism and the Counseling Profession

Causes, Consequences, and Methods for Counteraction

Matthew C. Fullen

There are approximately 47.8 million adults age 65 and over currently living in the United States, and this number is expected to grow to 98 million by 2060. As the number of older adults increases, it is important to understand how attitudes toward aging influence society, the aging process, and the counseling profession.

Ageism—defined as social stigma associated with old age or older people—has deleterious effects on older adults' physical health, psychological well-being, and self-perception. Myths about aging have led to beliefs about older people that are perpetuated throughout society, such as the notion that older adults are depressed, frail, cognitively impaired, and unable to learn or change. These myths persist in spite of research that demonstrates that older adults possess many psychosocial resources, frequently have high levels of self-rated and objectively measured health, and mostly do not experience dementia or other forms of cognitive impairment.

Research also indicates that age stereotypes directly influence older adults' health and well-being. For instance, older adults' perceptions of aging are associated with memory performance, hearing decline, developing Alzheimer's symptoms, and dying from respiratory or cardiovascular illnesses. In fact, one study found that older adults with more positive self-perceptions of aging lived 7.5 years longer than those with less positive self-perceptions of aging. However, older adults may not be exposed to interventions to promote well-being due to ageism's impact on the availability of mental health services among older adults.

Both systemic and individual ageism may account for the gap between the mental health needs of older adults and the number of counselors with age-specific training. For example, older adults are currently unable to use Medicare to access services provided by licensed professional counselors. Further, the gerontological counseling specialization was discontinued in 2009 when only two institutions had applied for accreditation. Some mental health professionals view older clients as less able to develop an adequate therapeutic relationship, less appropriate for therapy, and less likely to recover. Some also feel less competent in treating older people, and they are less willing to accept older people as clients.

To counteract ageism, counselors can dedicate their attention to generating positive views of aging in four domains: counselor education, advocacy, research, and counseling practice. For example, counselor educators can consciously develop practicum or internship sites in which older clients will be served. Counselors and counselor educators can make connections with members of the local area agency on aging, directors of local assisted living or skilled nursing facilities, and state policymakers who are responsible for budgetary and policy decisions related to aging. Research into advocacy efforts related to Medicare reimbursement also might advance the profession so that counselors can access Medicare services. Practitioners can incorporate resilience into an older client's treatment plan to create a buffer against internalized ageism as well as an opportunity to highlight older adults' abilities to adapt in the face of adversity. By combating ageism in these domains, members of the counseling profession have the opportunity to counteract ageism's deleterious effects.

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Counselor-in-Training Intentional Nondisclosure in Onsite Supervision

A Content Analysis

Ryan M. Cook, Laura E. Welfare, Devon E. Romero

Counselors-in-training (CITs) enrolled in Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP)-accredited programs are required to receive clinical supervision from an onsite supervisor during their onsite field experiences. In this time with their supervisors, CITs are encouraged to discuss their professional and personal struggles and goals. However, the information that they choose to share with their supervisor can then be used to evaluate their clinical performance and fitness as counselors. Thus, most (if not all) CITs sometimes choose to withhold relevant information from their supervisors because they are concerned with what could happen if they share the information. Findings from research on allied professions (e.g., psychology, social work) suggest that supervisees withhold a variety of types of information from their supervisors, but their intentional nondisclosures most commonly include negative reactions about their supervisor and/or experience in supervision, personal information, clinical mistakes, and evaluation concerns. The reasons for the intentional nondisclosure are most often because the supervisee perceived a poor relationship with their supervisor, felt the information was too personal to share, experienced negative feelings such as shame or embarrassment, or desired to maintain a favorable impression in the eyes of their supervisor.

Prior to the current study, intentional nondisclosure had been limitedly investigated in the counseling profession, and no previous studies had examined the types of information being withheld during onsite supervision as well as the reasons for the nondisclosures. Accordingly, we utilized content analysis to examine examples of intentional nondisclosures provided by 66 participants. Eleven types of intentional nondisclosure and 13 reasons for withholding the information emerged from the data. The most common types of information withheld by participants included negative reactions to supervisors, general client observations, and clinical mistakes, and the most common reasons for withholding the information were impression management, perceived unimportance, negative feelings, and supervisor incompetence. In addition to the most common experiences of intentional nondisclosure, some participants described their experiences of ineffective or harmful supervision. We present the participants' detailed examples of intentional nondisclosure in hopes to offer insight into CITs' experience during onsite supervision.

We hope that examples of intentional nondisclosures provided by participants help to normalize the experience for other CITs who may face similar challenges. We encourage CITs who are experiencing ineffective or harmful supervision to seek guidance and support from a peer, professional, faculty member, or professional association ethics consultant. We also encourage supervisors to be proactive in soliciting feedback from CITs about their experiences in supervision. This might also include intentionally normalizing potential clinical mistakes for CITs who experience pressure to perform perfectly. Finally, counselor education training programs may find it helpful to review examples of ineffective or harmful supervision with CITs prior to them starting their field experience. Implementing regular check-ins with CITs and soliciting feedback at the end of each semester to learn about their experience at their field placement may prevent future occurrences of ineffective or harmful supervision. In sum, collectively, CITs, supervisors, and counselor educators can work together to create solutions that mitigate intentional nondisclosure in supervision.

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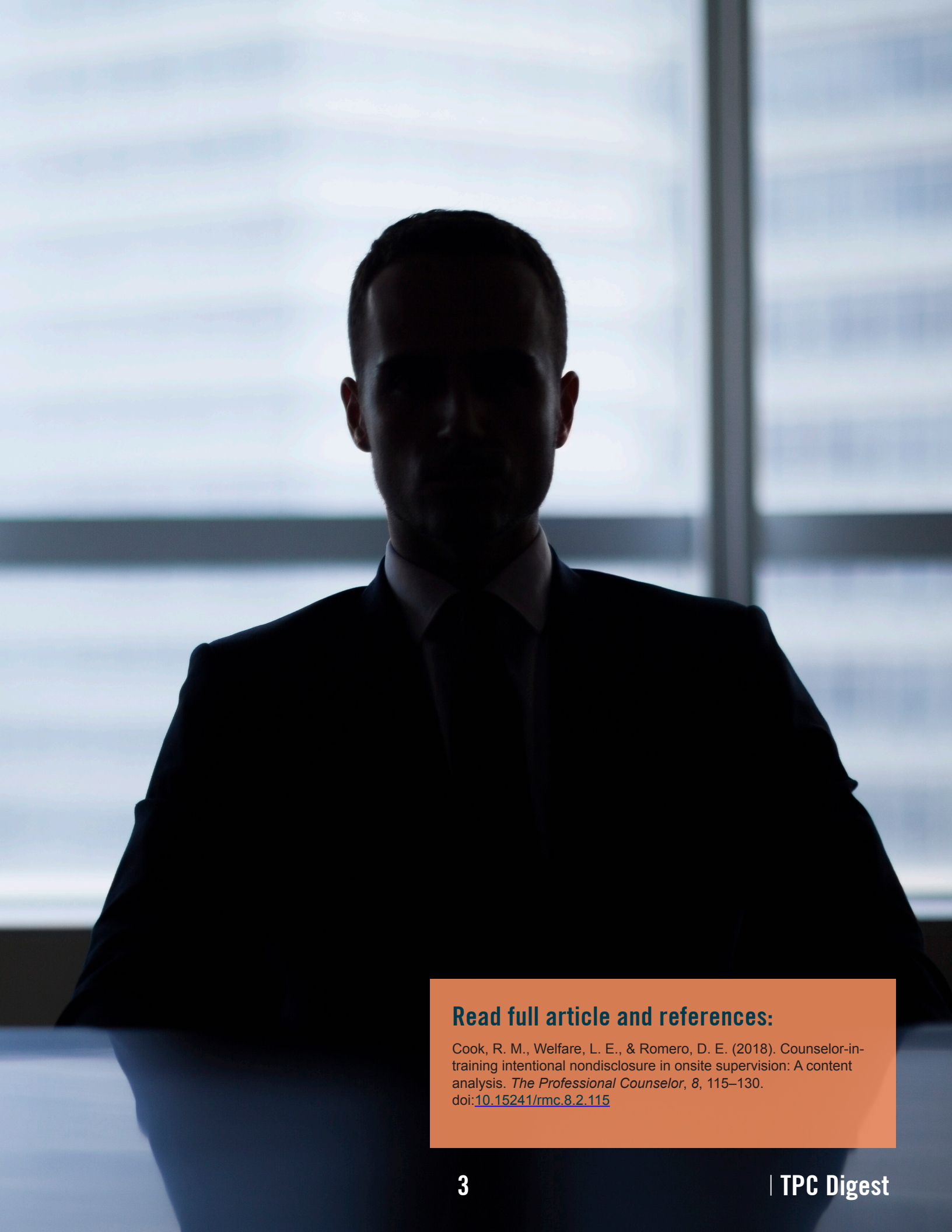

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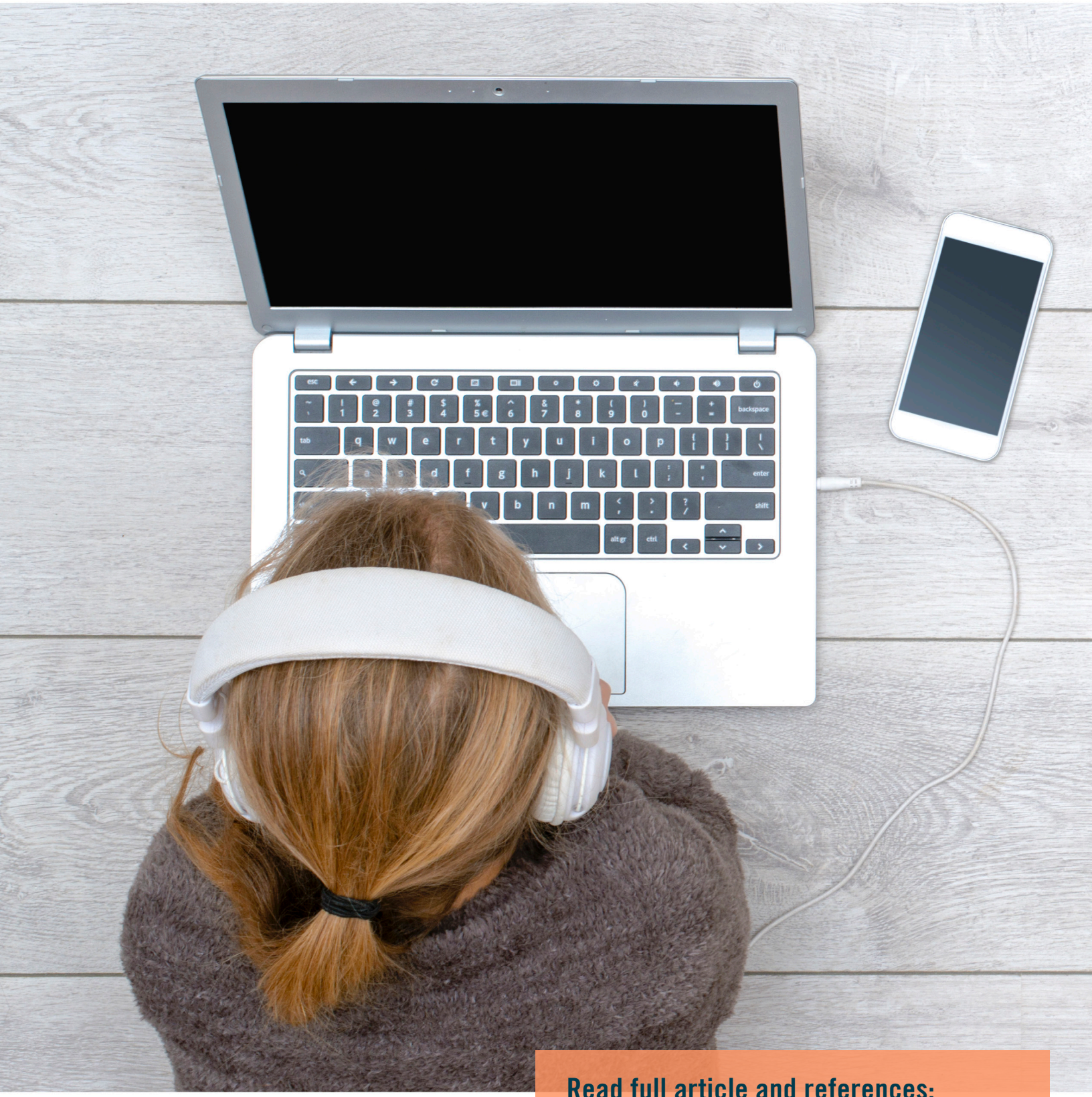

Read full article and references:

Snow, W. H., Lamar, M. R., Hinkle, S. J., & Speciale, M. (2018). Current practices in online counselor education. *The Professional Counselor*, *8*, 131–145. doi:10.15241/whs.8.2.131

Current Practices in Online Counselor Education

William H. Snow, Margaret R. Lamar, J. Scott Hinkle, Megan Speciale

Counselor education is following the broader trend in higher education of increased program offerings via distance education. This trend is likely not appreciated by all. The majority of today's counselor educators and clinicians were educated in traditional, residential formats and may possess an out-of-date or inaccurate understanding of the current practices that make today's online formats work.

Online education does fill a need. Remote and rural areas in the United States often lack physical access to counselor education programs, which limits the number of trained counselors in those regions. Urban areas may have more residential teaching options, but commute times on congested highways may put programs with traditional formats out of reach to many working students. International students may find themselves torn between wanting to gain the knowledge and skills provided in U.S.-based counselor education programs and wanting to remain in their country to serve their community. Online counselor education programs currently serve diverse populations in underserved areas throughout the world.

The four authors herein did not always believe in the efficacy of online learning. They were educated traditionally, began their teaching careers in residential classrooms, and later found themselves adding distance learning to their educational repertoire. This paper reviews their research findings on current practices as described in the literature and the survey results of counselor educators' perspectives on the challenges and success factors for online counselor education effectiveness.

The newest wave of technologies has taken much of the social distance out of distance education. Email, e-learning course management platforms, threaded discussion boards, audio calls, and videoconferencing allow for rich faculty–student interactions during individual advising, group supervision, and class sessions.

The survey asked counselor educators about their university's most significant challenges in providing quality online counselor education. Challenges included making online students feel a sense of connection to the university; changing faculty teaching styles from traditional classroom models to those better suited for online coursework; providing experiential clinical training to online students; supporting quality practicum and internship experiences for online students residing at a distance from the physical campus; and convincing faculty that quality outcomes are possible with online programs.

Reported best practices include ensuring the excellence of the student admissions screening process; ensuring excellent advising and feedback; setting high expectations; fostering student–faculty–community engagement; investing in quality instructional materials, course development, and technology support; providing excellent support for online clinical training and supervision; recognizing the workload requirements and time constraints of online students; and working to instill the belief in others that quality outcomes are possible with online counselor education programs.

Finally, what about the success of graduates? The survey respondents overwhelmingly believed that online graduates were as successful as residential students in gaining postgraduate clinical placements, obtaining state licensure, and getting accepted into doctoral programs.

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Service Learning in Human Development

Promoting Social Justice Perspectives in Counseling

Kristi A. Lee, Daniel J. Kelley-Petersen

As the population of the United States becomes increasingly more diverse, the field of counseling needs to improve on its readiness to provide competent, culturally relevant services to diverse people across the lifespan. This effort should begin within counselor education programs where the duty to prepare ethical, reflective, and culturally competent counselors lies. A core element of counselor education is the study of human development. In fact, the focus on healthy human development has been central to the field of counseling since it began. New counselors learn theories and models that have been used for decades to describe development across the lifespan. Yet, many of the theories that define healthy human development were created using single-gender or single-culture groups. How well these theories provide understanding of human development in our pluralistic society is an open question, and is a fundamental question of social justice for counselors to grapple with.

Because of accreditation, licensure, and certification requirements, counselor educators are obligated to teach what may be outdated theories and models. In the absence of new theories and models that provide both nuanced and robust understanding of development for people who represent diverse racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, religious, sexual orientation, and other groups, a better approach to teaching human development is needed. As an experiential teaching strategy that combines academic content learned in the classroom with collaborative and meaningful service in the community, service learning can provide a different approach. This study focused on the impact of using service learning with community counseling students in a course entitled Counseling Across the Lifespan, which focused on understanding human development from a counseling perspective.

In small groups and in collaborative relationships with community partners, students planned and carried out content-related projects that supported the mission and goals of the partner organizations. In order to successfully complete their projects, students reviewed relevant literature, conducted site visits, and created a product that went into immediate use for the community partner. Projects examples included a program on kindergarten readiness with refugee families, developing resources for housing for an older African immigrant community, and many others.

Using content analysis, researchers examined student reflection papers and self-assessments to understand the impact of using service learning in the human development class. Results from content analysis demonstrated how service learning enhanced learning, and broadened students' perceptions of themselves, others, and social justice in counseling. Findings indicated a shift in participants' perception of social justice in counseling. This study has implications for how counselor educators prepare students for the role of counselor and social justice advocate in the increasingly pluralistic society of the United States.

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Read full article and references:

Lee, K. A., & Kelley-Petersen, D. J. (2018). Service learning in human development: Promoting social justice perspectives in counseling. *The Professional Counselor*, *8*, 146–158. doi:10.15241/kal.8.2.146

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Gavin Williams, R., Baker, S. B., & Williams-Devane, C. R. (2018). Effects of customized counseling interventions on career and college readiness self-efficacy of three female foster care youth. *The Professional Counselor*, *8*, 159–174. doi:10.15241/rgw.8.2.159

Effects of Customized Counseling Interventions on Career and College Readiness Self-Efficacy of Three Female Foster Care Youth

Regina Gavin Williams, Stanley B. Baker, ClarLynda R. Williams-DeVane

Higher education is oftentimes viewed as the gateway to financial stability and overall upward mobility and success. However, for individuals who are underrepresented within higher education institutions, the road to achieve access to postsecondary education is not one easily traveled. Within this number is a subpopulation of individuals that are often invisible when documenting postsecondary education access and success—youth in the foster care system. The multiple barriers that foster care youth face prove to be a detrimental hindrance to both their personal and educational growth. Little is known about the factors that are associated with foster care youth's readiness to live independently after transitioning out of foster care, let alone about their readiness to engage in college during this "aging-out" period. Moreover, for those foster care youth who do gain admittance to higher education, little is known about their developmental needs during their high school-to-college transition, or ways in which the child welfare system, adults, and professionals can be of assistance to them. The experiences of these youth have been scarcely documented within the literature; thus, the youth have remained voiceless.

Counselors can play a pivotal role in the educational success and the postsecondary access of youth aging out of foster care by enhancing their career and college readiness self-efficacy. In this regard, creating interventions that both keep the unique circumstances of the foster care youth experience in mind and enhance their career and college readiness self-efficacy may increase their ability to gain access to postsecondary education opportunities. This is especially important because there has been a lack of information regarding the career and college readiness of foster care youth presented in the counseling literature. Moreover, studies show that individual interventions can be useful in enhancing the educational development of foster care youth; however, there have been no studies that examined the effects of such interventions on individual participants.

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of customized individual counseling interventions on the career and college readiness self-efficacy of adolescents within foster care. A 10-week intervention program created by the counselor/investigator was entitled Students That Are Reaching Success (S.T.A.R.S.). The three female participants were adolescents who were in foster care custody. An N = 1/A-B-A single-subject experimental design was utilized. The customized individual career and college readiness counseling intervention was the independent variable, and four career and college readiness self-efficacy factors, derived from the Career and College Readiness Self-Efficacy Inventory, were the dependent variables. Data were recorded and positive trends occurred for each participant with varying outcomes across the four factors. Recommendations for counseling practice and future research regarding the career and college readiness of foster care youth are shared.

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Development and Validation of the College Mental Health Perceived Competency Scale

Michael T. Kalkbrenner and Christopher A. Sink

The frequency and complexity of mental health distress among the college student population is a growing and serious concern. College campuses, typically, offer a number of mental health-related resources for students at both on-campus and off-campus locations. Unfortunately, a troubling number of college students who are living with mental health issues do not receive treatment. In recent years, identifying and training counseling referral agents (e.g., student peers and faculty members) to recognize and refer students to the counseling center and other mental health resources has become a key role of college counselors. This new role for college counselors has created a need for research about new methods for aiding college counselors with their outreach and consultation work. To help meet this need, the authors developed a short questionnaire, the College Mental Health Perceived Competency Scale (CMHPCS), to be used as a tool by college counselors for identifying and training counseling referral agents to recognize and refer students/peers to resources for mental wellness.

The aim of this study was to develop and validate the CMHPCS, a brief questionnaire for measuring the extent to which university community members are confident in their ability to promote a campus climate that is supportive, accepting, and facilitative towards mental wellness. Questionnaire items were developed based on self-determination theory (SDT), a psychological orientation to human motivation. Based on SDT, we predicted that increases in the extent to which individuals feel competent that they can perform an action or behavior is associated with increases in their motivation to participate in that action or behavior.

Three major statistical analyses, including exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and hierarchical logistic regression, were computed using a sample of faculty members and undergraduate students. Results of these analyses supported the psychometric properties of the 12-item CMHPCS. In particular, the following subscales emerged from the data: engagement, knowledge, and fear. The engagement dimension estimates the degree to which a faculty member is involved with interacting, supporting, and working with students who are struggling with mental health disorders. The fear subscale appraises one's anxiety or concern surrounding mental health issues on college campuses. The knowledge subscale reflects the extent to which the respondent was familiar with mental health issues on college campuses. We also found that student and faculty members' scores on the CMHPCS were significant predictors of an increase in the odds of having made a student referral to the counseling center.

On a practical level, the CMHPCS can be used by college counselors to provide a baseline measure of perceived competence for promoting mental health on campus among students and faculty members. The measure also is valuable for college counselors as they assist with new student and new faculty orientations. It is user-friendly, short, and versatile (for use with faculty and student populations). The results also can be used to aid college counselors in structuring the content of educational sessions for recognizing and referring students to the counseling center.

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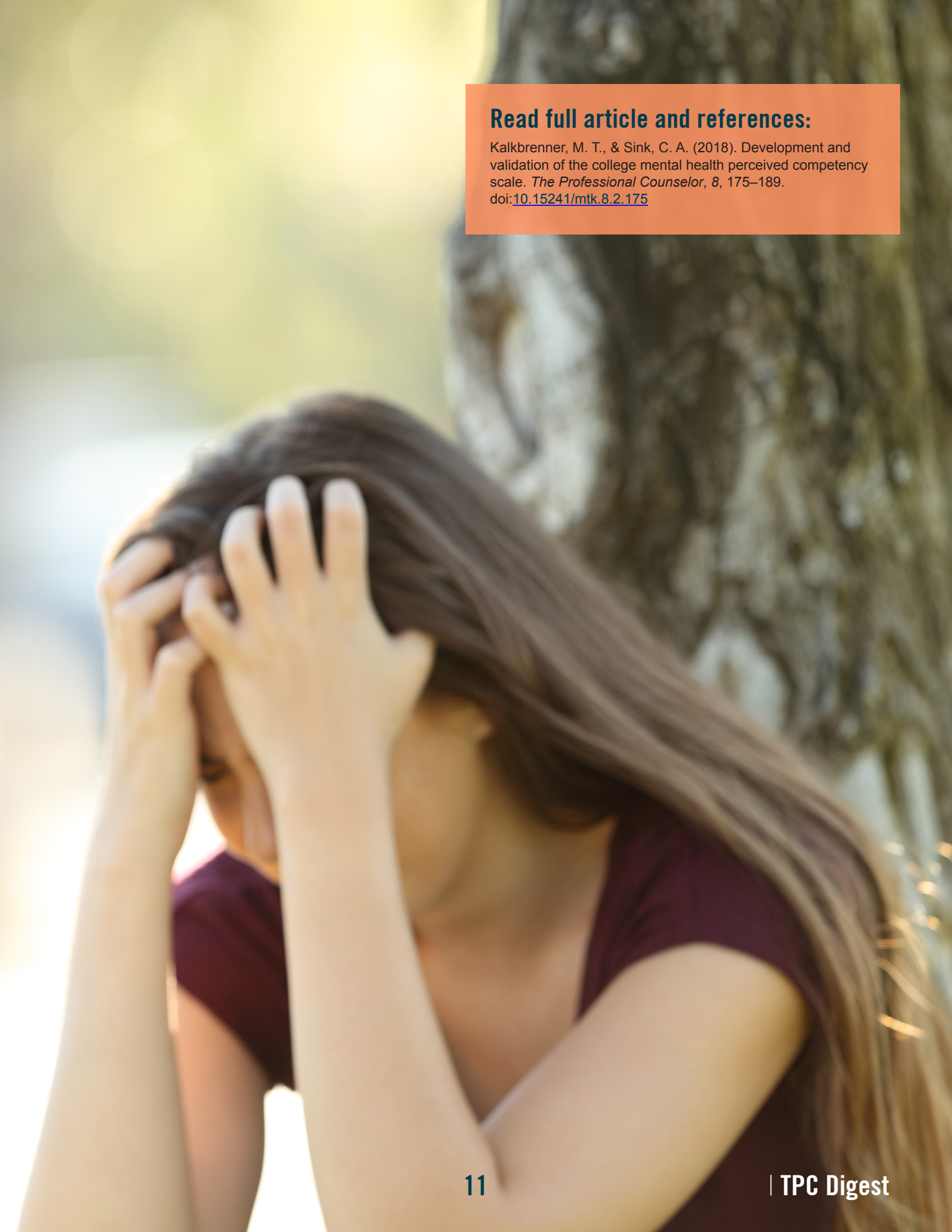

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Kalkbrenner, M. T., & Sink, C. A. (2018). Development and validation of the college mental health perceived competency scale. *The Professional Counselor*, *8*, 175–189. doi:10.15241/mtk.8.2.175

Becoming a Gatekeeper

Recommendations for Preparing Doctoral Students in Counselor Education

Marisa C. Rapp, Steven J. Moody, Leslie A. Stewart

Counselor educators are tasked with serving as the profession's primary gatekeepers as they supervise counselors-in-training (CITs) during their graduate and clinical training. Gatekeeping responsibilities performed by counselor educators consist of regular and ongoing evaluations of CITs' academic, clinical, and dispositional readiness for a career as a professional counselor. If counselor educators fail to intervene with CITs who are lacking the necessary knowledge, skills, and values expected of a professional counselor, CITs may enter the workforce not equipped to provide quality services. This concept is referred to as gate slippage in the counseling literature. Gate slippage not only impacts client care, but other CITs' educational experience and the integrity of the profession. Consequently, effective gatekeeping by counselor educators is central to the health of the counseling profession.

Doctoral preparation programs in counselor education are expected to prepare graduates to work in a variety of roles, one of which is gatekeeper. The latest CACREP standards call for doctoral programs to graduate students competent in gatekeeping functions relevant to teaching and clinical supervision. Despite the CACREP standards and doctoral students serving in evaluator positions during their doctoral studies, little is known regarding the development and training of doctoral students as emerging gatekeepers. This is problematic as the role of gatekeeper is well documented to be complex and multifaceted, and without appropriate training, the profession runs the risk of ill-equipped gatekeepers endorsing CITs who are not ready for the profession.

Although various authors assert the importance of gatekeeping training in doctoral degree programs, no corresponding guidelines exist for content of material to be introduced in trainings. Accordingly, the purpose of this article is to provide recommendations for doctoral preparation programs on content areas that may help doctoral students better understand the complex role of gatekeeper. Recommendations offered were compiled from a thorough review of professional literature and contain four general content areas of knowledge related to gatekeeping practices and the role of gatekeeper: current variation of language espoused by the counselor education community; ethics related to gatekeeping; cultural considerations; and legal and due process considerations. The four general areas of knowledge should be introduced alongside program-specific material to help cultivate a well-informed gatekeeper.

Faculty creating doctoral curricula can implement the recommended content areas in a flexible manner that meets the needs of their specific program. Content areas can be applied to enhance existing curricula, infused throughout coursework, or disseminated in a gatekeeping training or general orientation. If doctoral students are expected to have interaction and evaluative power with CITs, gatekeeping content areas should be introduced prior to this interaction. Finally, this article brings to light the lack of professional literature exploring the development and training of emerging gatekeepers. In order to understand how doctoral preparation programs can support emerging gatekeepers and ensure competency upon graduation, a call to the counseling profession for more research is timely and needed.

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Read full article and references:

Rapp, M. C., Moody, S. J., & Stewart, L. A. (2018). Becoming a gatekeeper: Recommendations for preparing doctoral students in counselor education. *The Professional Counselor*, *8*, 190–199. doi:10.15241/mcr.8.2.190

Read full article and references:

Janson, C., & Filibert, S. (2018). Discursive Digital Reflection: A method for enhancing supervision and training. *The Professional Counselor*, *8*, 200–212. doi:10.15241/cj.8.2.200

Discursive Digital Reflection

A Method for Enhancing Supervision and Training

Christopher Janson, Sophie Filibert

The purpose of counselor supervision has evolved to include the development of counseling students' reflective thinking and practices. The inclusion of reflective practices within supervision is partially predicated on the notion that given the idiosyncratic and complex interactions involved in counseling, the theories and techniques that guide practice are rendered ineffective at times. Implementing reflective practices within supervision can lead to more effective case conceptualization; the development of counselor self-awareness and the integration of counselor identity; the mediation between theoretical knowledge and practice; increased sense of trainee confidence; and the interrogation of social inequities and injustices that many clients experience.

Counselor educators preparing, training, and supervising counselors are tasked with facilitating students' abilities to integrate theories of counseling into actual practice. The term praxis is used to describe the mediation between theory and practice that occurs through reflection. Intentional reflective practices serve to not only close the gap between theory and practice, but can and should transform by enriching understanding of theory while simultaneously developing the ability to practice more effectively through foundational theoretical approaches. Furthermore, reflection can be a mechanism to integrate theory and practice, as well as develop agency in the process. Reflection can serve as a foundation of transformative action.

The goal of this study was to present the use of discursive digital reflection (DDR), a reflective approach to counselor supervision that was developed and used within a counselor preparation program. DDR is the use of digital video to record a collaborative reflection that occurs through dialogue between a counselor supervisee and the client. Upon recording, the discursive discourse becomes an artifact for reflection, which can then be used as a supervision tool for use during individual, triadic, or group supervision. DDR is suggested as an effective means of facilitating the development of counselors who are reflective practitioners and culturally competent.

The integration of two key features of DDR distinguishes it from other current methods within and beyond counselor education. First, DDR is a method for reflection that moves beyond examining only counseling experiences, to reflection on the very process of reflection itself. Second, DDR broadens the participation of reflection on the counseling process to include clients. Reviews of discursive digital reflections include the clients themselves, thus enhancing the reflective capacity of both students and clients.

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