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Reflections on Power From Feminist Counselor Educators

Melissa J. Fickling, Matthew Graden, Jodi L. Tangen

Empowerment is a process that begins with awareness of power dynamics. Power is widely recognized in counseling's professional standards, competencies, and best practices as something about which counselors, supervisors, counselor educators, and researchers should be aware. However, little is known about how power is perceived by counselor educators who, by necessity, operate in many different professional roles with their students (e.g., teacher, supervisor, mentor).

Given the gendered nature of perceptions of power, as well as the centrality of power analysis in feminist scholarship, we decided to utilize a feminist framework in the design and execution of the present study. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how counselor educators who identify as feminists understand and experience power in counselor education. Thirteen feminist women were interviewed. We used a loosely structured interview protocol to elicit participant experiences with the phenomenon of power in the context of counselor education. From these data, we identified an essential theme of *analysis of power*. Within this theme, we identified five categories: (a) definitions and descriptions of power, (b) higher education context and culture, (c) uses and misuses of power, (d) personal development around power, and (e) considerations of potential backlash.

Participants analyzed interactions of power within and between various contexts and roles. For the feminist counselor educators in this study, power is about helping. In describing power, participants identified feelings of empowerment or disempowerment. Disempowerment was described with feeling words that captured a sense of separation and

helplessness. Empowerment, on the other hand, was described as feeling energetic and connected. Participants identified various types of power, including personal, positional, and institutional. Higher education context and culture became a salient subtheme in our findings, described as "the way things are done in institutions of higher learning." Participants provided many examples of their perceptions of uses and misuses of power and linked these behaviors to their sense of ethics. No participants claimed to feel total ease in their relationship with their own power, though most acknowledged that with time, they had become more comfortable with acknowledging and using their power when necessary. Participants shared how their awareness of privileged and marginalized statuses raised their understanding of power. Participants shared about the energy spent in weighing the potential backlash to their expressions of power, or their calling out of unethical uses of power. Anticipated backlash often resulted in participants not doing or saying something for fear of "making waves" or being labeled a "troublemaker."

Contemplating, reflecting on, and working with power are worthwhile efforts according to the participants in this study, which is supported by scholarly literature on the topic. Findings point to a pressing need for more rigorous self-reflection among counselor educators and counseling leadership, as well as greater accountability for using power ethically. Power analysis at each level and each role in which counselor educators find themselves could help to uncover issues of power and its uses.

Melissa J. Fickling, PhD, ACS, BC-TMH, LCPC, is an associate professor at Northern Illinois University. Matthew Graden, MSEd, is a professional school counselor. Jodi L. Tangen is an associate professor at North Dakota State University. Correspondence may be addressed to Melissa J. Fickling, 1425 W. Lincoln Hwy, Gabel 200, DeKalb, IL 60115, mfickling@niu.edu.

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Evaluating the Impact of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy on Hope and Clinical Symptoms With Latine Clients

Krystle Himmelberger, James Ikonomopoulos, Javier Cavazos Vela

The Latine population is a fast-growing group in the United States and makes up approximately 19% of the U.S. population. Despite this growth, members of this culturally diverse population continue to face individual, interpersonal, and institutional challenges. Because Latine individuals experience discrimination in negative environments, perceive lack of support from counselors and teachers in K–12 school environments, and experience microaggressions, they are likely to experience greater mental health challenges. Researchers have identified numerous symptoms that represent Latine individuals' mental health experiences, likely putting them at greater risk for mental health impairment and poor psychological functioning. Given that Latine individuals might be at greater risk for psychopathology and their mental health needs are often unaddressed, further evaluation of the effectiveness of counseling practices for this population is necessary.

Solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) is a strength-based and evidence-based intervention that helps clients focus on personal strengths, identify exceptions to problems, and highlight small successes. Developed from the clinical practice of Steven de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg, SFBT is a future-focused and goal-directed approach that focuses on searching for solutions and is created on the belief that clients have the knowledge and resources to resolve their problems. Counselors' therapeutic task is to help clients imagine how they would like things to be different and what it will take to facilitate small changes. Counselors take active roles by asking questions to help clients look at the situation from different perspectives and use techniques to identify where a solution occurs.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of SFBT for increasing hope and decreasing clinical symptoms among Latine clients. We evaluated the following research question: To what extent is SFBT effective for increasing hope and decreasing clinical symptoms among Latine clients who receive services at a community counseling clinic? Participants in this study were two adults admitted into treatment at an outpatient community counseling clinic in the Southern region of the United States. Both participants identified as Hispanic; one identified as a female and the other identified as a male.

The results yield promising findings and preliminary evidence about the efficacy of SFBT as an intervention for promoting positive change in two Latine clients' clinical symptoms and levels of hope. Findings from the current study also lend further support regarding the efficacy among counselors-in-training (CITs) who aim to impact clients' psychological functioning at a community counseling training clinic. Based on our findings, we propose a few recommendations for counselor educators, CITs, and practitioners. Our study provides evidence that CITs at community counseling centers can provide effective treatments with culturally diverse clients with moderate internalized symptoms such as depression and anxiety. As a result, SFBT can be taught and infused into counselor education curricula and can be delivered by future licensed professional counselors, school counselors, or counseling interns.

Krystle Himmelberger, MS, LPC, is a doctoral candidate at St. Mary's University. James Ikonomopoulos, PhD, LPC-S, is an assistant professor at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi. Javier Cavazos Vela, PhD, LPC, is a professor at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Correspondence may be addressed to James Ikonomopoulos, 6300 Ocean Drive, Unit 5834, Corpus Christi, TX 78412, james.ikonomopoulos1@tamucc.edu.

Guidelines and Recommendations for Writing a Rigorous Quantitative Methods Section in Counseling and Related Fields

Michael T. Kalkbrenner

Quantitative research involves collecting and analyzing numerical data. The Methods section in a quantitative study lays out the protocols and procedures for how the authors conducted the study and analyzed the data. The Methods section is particularly important because methodological flaws cannot usually be resolved once data collection is complete and, in the most extreme cases, serious methodological flaws can render the findings meaningless. Thus, it is imperative that counseling practitioners and other consumers of quantitative research are aware of how to recognize and evaluate the key elements in a quantitative Methods section. To this end, the author wrote this article as a primer on guidelines, best practices, and recommendations for writing or evaluating the rigor of the Methods section of quantitative studies.

The article begins with an overview and layperson's description of the major elements and subsections of a quantitative Methods section, including introducing the research design, Participants and Procedures, Measures, and Data Analysis. More specifically, the author details sampling procedures (both probability and non-probability procedures) and statistical power analysis. The author provides commentary about the following important aspects of the Measures subsection: (a) introducing the instrument and construct(s) of measurement, (b) presenting existing and computing reliability and validity evidence of test scores, and (c) cross-cultural fairness and norming considerations. The Data Analysis section includes information about the data, variables, data analysis techniques, and assumption-checking procedures.

The author concludes with an exemplar Methods section to provide a sample of one way to apply the guidelines for writing or evaluating the quantitative research Methods that are detailed in the article. The exemplar Methods section is based on a practice data set, includes a sample research question, and provides a step-by-step example of how to write a quantitative Methods section. Finally, readers are presented with an Appendix, which includes a bullet-pointed outline and brief overview of a quantitative Methods section.

Michael T. Kalkbrenner, PhD, NCC, is an associate professor at New Mexico State University. Correspondence may be addressed to Michael T. Kalkbrenner, 1780 E. University Ave., Las Cruces, NM 88003, mkalk001@nmsu.edu.

School Counselors' Emotional Intelligence and Comprehensive School Counseling Program Implementation

The Mediating Role of Transformational Leadership

Derron Hilts, Yanhong Liu, Melissa Luke

School counselors have been called upon to design and implement culturally responsive comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCPs) that have a deliberate and systemic focus on facilitating optimal student outcomes and development. To this end, school counselors are expected to apply and enact a model of leadership in the process of program implementation. Yet, little is known about the relationship between school counselors' program implementation and their leadership practices grounded in a specific model such as transformational leadership.

Over the past several decades, emotional intelligence has been increasingly attributed as a critical trait and ability of individuals employing effective leadership. In a school counseling context, school counselors must be emotionally attuned with themselves and others to more effectively navigate the complexities of the systems in which they operate. Moreover, initial research has revealed that not only is emotional intelligence an antecedent of leadership, but that leadership, particularly transformational leadership, mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and job-related behavior such as job performance.

That said, emotional intelligence has not been examined in relation to school counselors' CSCP implementation and service outcomes, even though CSCP implementation has been widely embraced as a core of the ASCA National Model. Likewise, although emotional intelligence has been studied with counseling practice and leadership separately, we identified no empirical research that has examined the mechanisms between school counselors' emotional intelligence, transformational leadership practice, and outcomes of program implementation. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine whether (a) school counselors' emotional intelligence predicted their CSCP implementation; and (b) engagement in transformational leadership practices mediate, or partly explain, the relationship between emotional intelligence and CSCP implementation.

Indeed, our results indicated that (a) school counselors' emotional intelligence predicted their CSCP implementation; (b) school counselors' emotional intelligence was positively associated with their engagement in transformational leadership; and (c) school counselors' engagement in transformational leadership practices mediated the relationship between their emotional intelligence and CSCP implementation. Our study underscores the significant relationships between school counselors' emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, and CSCP implementation. Based on our results in the present study, we explore implications of school counselor training, practice, and future research.

Derron Hilts, PhD, NCC, is an assistant professor at Niagara University. Yanhong Liu, PhD, NCC, is an associate professor at Syracuse University. Melissa Luke, PhD, NCC, is a dean's professor at Syracuse University. Correspondence may be addressed to Derron Hilts, 5795 Lewiston Rd, Niagara University, NY 14109, dhilts@niagara.edu.

Barriers to Seeking Counseling Among STEM Students

The Revised Fit, Stigma, and Value Scale

Michael T. Kalkbrenner, Gabriella Miceli

Working with college students enrolled in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors can be particularly challenging for professional counselors, as STEM students are a subgroup of college students that face unique risks for developing mental health issues. When compared to their non-STEM colleagues, STEM students are less likely to recognize warning signs of mental distress, and they access mental health support services at lower rates than their peers. The research literature is missing information on why STEM students tend to seek counseling at lower rates. One of the first steps in supporting STEM students' mental health is validating scores on a screening tool for measuring barriers to counseling (reasons behind why they avoid counseling) among STEM students. Although a number of screening tools appraising barriers to counseling exist, none of them have been validated with STEM students. Score validation or testing the properties of an existing survey with a new population is crucial. Otherwise, there is no way to know if the scale actually measures what the test developers claim it measures. The Revised Fit, Stigma, and Value (RFSV) Scale is a scale for appraising barriers to counseling that has been normed with a number of non–college-based populations. If RFSV scores are validated with STEM students, the scale has potential to fill the aforementioned gap in the measurement literature. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to validate STEM students' scores on the RFSV Scale and investigate demographic correlates with STEM students' RFSV scores.

The RFSV Scale is made up of three subscales that measure a person's reticence to seek counseling: Fit, Stigma, and Value. The Fit subscale measures a person's hesitation to seek counseling because they believe the process of counseling is not suitable for their personal worldview. The Stigma subscale measures reluctance to seek counseling because of feelings of embarrassment or shame. The Value subscale measures an aversion to seeking counseling because one believes that the effort required would not be worth the potential benefits.

Our findings were favorable and showed that STEM students' RFSV scores were reliable (consistent) and valid (the test measured what it was supposed to measure). The results also showed that lower scores on the Value subscale (lower scores = more positive attitudes about counseling) significantly predicted a peer-to-peer referral to the college counseling center. In addition, male STEM students scored significantly higher (higher scores = a greater reluctance to seek counseling) on the Value barrier when compared to female STEM students. Finally, STEM students without a help-seeking history (students who had never attended counseling in the past) scored significantly higher on the Value barrier than STEM students with a help-seeking history (students who had attended one or more sessions of counseling in the past). This article concludes with a discussion of a variety of implications for how professional counselors can use the RFSV Scale to measure and possibly reduce barriers associated with attending counseling among STEM students.

Michael T. Kalkbrenner, PhD, NCC, is an associate professor at New Mexico State University. Gabriella Miceli, MS, LPC-A, is a doctoral student at New Mexico State University. Correspondence may be addressed to Michael T. Kalkbrenner, 1780 E. University Ave., Las Cruces, NM 88003, mkalk001@nmsu.edu.