

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

As I step down from my four year stint as TCAJ co-editor and reflect back on my experience, I recognize it has been a fond learning experience and I am proud of the product I have played a small part in producing. I realize, too, I want to thank a number of people for their efforts and contributions. First, thank you Dr. Robin Lee who took the lead in transforming the journal from hard copy print to online media and ensuring it "gets to press." Second, thank you all past and current review board members who serve by painstakingly reviewing manuscripts and offering suggestions for improvement. Third, thank you to Drs. Nancy Nishamura and Ronnie Priest from the University of Memphis who are taking over my co-editor responsibilities. Lastly, thank you to those of you who submitted your scholarly work for publication consideration. I realize research and writing are hard work and submitting your work for peer review and critique is a risky endeavor.

Sincerely,

Joel

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Tennessee Association for Counselor Education and Supervision

The Roles of School Psychologists and School Counselors as Perceived by Educators

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The authors of this exploratory study investigated teacher and administrator perceptions of school counselor and school psychologist roles. Teachers and administrators from a large, urban school district in the southeast were provided a ten-question survey that consisted of tasks considered as appropriate or inappropriate based on the standards of the school counselor and school psychology professional learned societies. Approximately 803 (20%) of the teachers and 75 (38%) of the administrators responded. Teachers and administrators had similar perceptions regarding many school counselor and school psychologist tasks, with beliefs congruent to the tasks endorsed by the learned societies of the school counselor and school psychologist. These findings contradicted previous studies that found disparate perceptions among teachers and administrators regarding the roles of school counselors and school psychologists. Yet, there is a need for continuing dialogue regarding the training and education of school counselors and school psychologists.

School counselors and school psychologists have assisted educators and other stakeholders in enhancing student growth for many decades. Yet, it is not unusual for individuals to express confusion between the role of the school counselor and school psychologist. This uncertainty is not limited to parents/guardians and other community members. Research indicates that teachers and administrators also express a lack of clarity as to how each of these professionals contribute to the educational mission of schools (Santos de-Barona & Barona, 2006). This role misunderstanding often translates into frustration among stakeholders when task expectations are not fulfilled. Dissatisfaction among school counselors and school psychologists may also result from compromised roles that are incongruent with their training and education (Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001). Historical, political, and social issues influenced the emergence of school counselors and school psychologists and informed the roles of these professionals.

The Emergence of the School Counselor in American Schools

Since the inception of the school counseling profession, school counselors have engaged in multiple tasks such as vocational guidance, mental health issues, student identification for specific programs, assessment of programs and interventions (Herr, 2002), and other tasks based on current educational and societal needs. With today's educational reform movement, there is a need for all educational programs to collect data to show effectiveness; school counseling programs are no exception. In response to this demand, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) developed the ASCA National Standards in which student outcomes in the academic, career, and personal/social domains (American School Counselor Association, 2005) were identified. Three years later the ASCA took these Standards one step further through the development of the ASCA National Model[®] that serves as a prototype for school counselors to use in developing a comprehensive, developmental school counseling (CDSC) program (Schwallie-Giddis, terMaat, & Pak, 2003), and to standardize the school counselor role.

Much has been written throughout the decades regarding the relationship between the school counselor and principal. The major theme to emerge from the literature is that administrators do not fully understand the school counselor's education and training (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Kolodinsky, Draves, Schroder, Lindsey, & Zlatev, 2009; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Yet, the school administrator is the most essential factor influencing school programs (Nichter & Nelson, 2006) and the cultural expectations of the school environment.

The results of a study by Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Self, Milde, Leitner, and Skelton (2006) revealed differing perceptions among practicing school counselors, school counselors-in-training, and principals as to how school counselors spend their time. Other

research revealed that there were more differences between elementary and secondary school counselors than between school principals and school counselors at similar grade levels (Pérusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004).

Little research has been conducted on teacher perceptions of the school counselor's role, and the research that does exist is inconsistent. Reiner, Colbert, and Pérusse (2009) revealed that high school teachers continue to expect professional school counselors to engage in inappropriate duties despite fervent efforts of the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) to communicate how the school counselor plays a role in enhancing student growth. In contrast, Clark and Amatea (2004) revealed teachers at all grade levels indicated that collaboration, school-wide involvement, and assistance with students with particular concerns were the major responsibilities of professional school counselors; perceptions congruent with the ASCA philosophical mission.

The Emergence of the School Psychologist in American Schools

Similar to the school counselor, school psychologists' responsibilities have been defined through legal initiatives and school district policies (Gilman & Medway, 2007), and those who do not have a clear understanding of the school psychologist's role. School psychologists initially entered the educational setting to fulfill numerous educational needs (Braden, DiMarino-Linnen, & Good, 2001). When the first intelligence tests were developed, assessing children who were not making acceptable academic progress was a task assumed by school psychologists. As school administrators demanded services for students with special needs, this role became the benchmark of the school psychology profession, a role that has not been entirely accepted by school psychologists (Fagan, 2005). With the multiple responsibilities assumed by school psychologists, it was not until 1954 that school psychology was starting to be recognized as a profession (French, 1984). Despite this professional orientation, role misconception continues to be a subject of debate.

In a study by Gilman and Medway (2007), general educator perceptions of school psychologists were compared with those of special educators. General educators reported less knowledge of the school psychologist's role than did special education teachers. In this same study educators were asked to indicate their perception of the effectiveness of school psychologists versus school counselor services. General education teachers reported that the services of school counselors were more effective than those of school psychologists, and conversely special educators perceived the school psychologist's role to be more valuable than that of the school counselor. The researchers surmised that these results were due to the amount of interactions and time teachers spent with either of these professionals.

A recent focus of the school psychology profession is greater collaboration between school psychologists and other stakeholders to develop a greater understanding of school psychologists' services (Gilman & Medway, 2007). In a study by Watkins, Crosby,

and Pearson (2001), school psychologists reported that they would like to reduce their assessment activities in favor of more diverse activities such as consultation and interventions. Teachers and administrators were in favor of this expressed desire, but wanted school psychologists to continue their assessment activities in addition to these supplementary activities.

For several years there has been discussion of a paradigm shift for school counselors and school psychologists (Gilman & Medway, 2007) due to issues such as divorce, HIV, pregnancy, drug abuse, bullying, and school violence. This shift includes school psychologists and school counselors serving as advocates of change by placing greater emphasis on the mental health needs of all students (Braden, et al., 2001; Brown, Dahlbeck, & Sparkman-Barnes, 2006; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004). Despite these recommendations, special education laws, school administrator perceptions, and historical roles (Braden, et al., 2001) have created barriers to the role and function of school psychologists and school counselors. Although school counselors and school psychologists have a wide range of skills to assist with mental health and instructional issues, educational professionals continue to view school psychologists as assessment experts (Cherame & Sutter, 1993, as cited in Gilman & Gabriel, 2004), and school counselors as quasi-administrators (Keys, Bemak, & Lockhart, 1998). Furthermore, because many community members believe that schools are designed to focus on teaching and achievement, there is resistance to counseling and interventions that focus on personal concerns in the schools (Keys, et al., 1998).

Professional Organizations and Standards

Both school counselors and school psychologists are guided by specific standards to promote quality services (Crespi & Politikos, 2004). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA), a division of the American Counseling Association (ACA), guides school counselors and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) sets policy for training school counselors throughout the nation (CACREP, 2009). The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2010a) guides school psychologists, as does division 16 of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2007). School psychology and school counselor education programs not accredited by these organizations use their standards to guide training programs

Although each of these professions has a different origin and philosophy, both of these professionals have similar education with training that overlaps (Rowley, 2000). Yet, there is little collaboration between these professionals due to separate training programs (Rowley, 2000; Shoffer & Briggs, 2001), varied stakeholder expectations (Rowley, 2000), lack of administrative support (Staton & Gilligan, 2003), tendencies to work in isolation (Shoffer & Briggs, 2001), and the absence of a collaborative model (Rowley, 2000). As a result, students and other stakeholders receive duplication of efforts and/or dilution of services.

Purpose of the Study

Despite available research that describes role functions of the school counselor and school psychologist over previous decades, the findings are now dated and do not take into account changing circumstances or recent educational reform initiatives such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Both school counselors and school psychologists work from a developmental, comprehensive approach with training and education that reflect the theoretical approach for this study. This exploratory study was conducted to determine how administrators and teachers perceived the roles of school psychologists and school counselors.

The researchers investigated the following research questions:

1. What tasks should be performed by school psychologists and school counselors as perceived by teachers?
2. What tasks should be performed by school psychologists and school counselors as perceived by administrators?
3. What differences exist between the perceptions of teachers and administrators as to the tasks that should be performed by the school counselor or school psychologist?

Method

Participants

The participants were teachers and administrators from a large, urban city school district located in the southern region of the country. The district student body consisted of approximately 57,000 students in grades prek-12. Out of approximately 4,088 teachers in the system, 803 teachers responded to this study for a response rate of 20%. Approximately 593 (74%) were general classroom teachers, 98 (12%) were special area teachers, and 112 (14%) were special education teachers. Out of approximately 199 administrators, seventy-five individuals responded to this study for a response rate of 38%.

The demographic breakdown of the teacher respondents indicated 129 (16%) men and 666 (83%) women, with other respondents not responding to this question. Of those that responded to the question on the highest level of education attained, 329 teachers (41%) possessed a Bachelors degree, 450 (56%) indicated their highest level of education was a Masters or Specialist degree, and 16 (2%) had a Doctoral degree. The remaining participants did not respond to this question. Three hundred seventy-four (47%) teachers indicated working in an elementary/intermediate school setting, 151 (19%) indicated working in a middle/junior high school, 249 (31%) high school, 14 (1%) preschool and 15 (2%) missing, or other.

Of the administration respondents, approximately 32 (43%) were men, and 38 (51%) were women, and others did not respond to this question. Among the administrators who responded to the highest level of education 66 (88%) had either a Master's or a Specialist degree, and 5 (7%) reported having a Doctorate. Approximately 31 (41%) worked in an elementary/intermediate setting, 24 (32%) in a middle school/junior high, and 15 (20%) in a high school. The remaining participants did not respond to this question. The demographics are presented in Table 1.

Procedure

After receiving permission to conduct this study from the Institutional Review Board and the school district research officer, an initial email was sent to all principals in the school district informing them that all teachers and administrators would be receiving an email invitation to participate in the study. A second email was sent to the participants with a link to access the survey posted on *counselingsurveys.org*. The message in the email contained the purpose of the study, informed potential participants that permission to conduct the study was granted, and that participation in the survey was voluntary without consequences for not participating. The survey was to be completed within a three-week period and three reminder emails were sent in one-week intervals throughout this time period. The survey consisted of demographic questions and multiple-choice questions with radio-button responses.

Instrumentation

The ASCA supports a developmental, comprehensive, and systemic school counseling program in which school counselors collaborate with stakeholders to promote the academic, career, and personal/social needs of all school-aged youth. Likewise, according to the NASP *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services*, school psychologists provide services that are "delivered in a manner that ensures the provision of a comprehensive and seamless continuum of services" (NASP, 2010b, p.9).

The instrument was developed based on the developmental and theoretical standards that guide the professional organizations (ASCA, APA, CACREP, and NASP), recommendations of specialists within both the school counseling and school psychology professions, and tasks that are considered as acceptable or unacceptable for either profession based on a review of the literature. The instrument was pilot-tested by a group of practicing school counselors and school psychologists, and revisions were made based on their feedback. The survey consisted of two sections. The first section included demographic questions, and the second section consisted of ten task questions where participants were asked to indicate the professional they perceived should perform an identified task (school counselor, school psychologist, neither, both, or don't know). Although the researchers

did not obtain test-retest reliability due to the nature of the survey, the instrument does have a high degree of face validity due to the items being obtained directly from the professional learning society standards.

Results

A Pearson Chi-Square analysis was used to determine the tasks school counselors and school psychologists should perform as perceived by teachers and administrators. However, descriptive statistics were used to compare results because the data violated nonparametric chi-square assumptions (e.g. several cells in the cross-tabulated tables had less than five participants). Each question and corresponding result is presented below, with overall statistics that relate to each question presented in Table 2. The number of participants responding to each question varies due to response omissions.

Takes a Leadership Role in the Event of a School Crisis

In determining the professional perceived to assume a leadership role in the event of a crisis, 32.2% of the teachers ($n = 199$) and 29.7% administrators ($n = 22$) believed that the school counselor was responsible for this task. In addition, it was the school psychologist 8.7% of the teachers ($n = 54$) and 5.4% of the administrators ($n = 4$) perceived to be responsible for crisis leadership, with 23.5% of the teachers ($n = 145$) and 24.3% of the principals ($n = 18$) who believed neither the school counselor nor the school psychologist should assume this role. However, 35.6% of the teachers ($n = 220$) and 40.5% of the administrators ($n = 30$) perceived that both the school counselor and school psychologist should assume this role.

Conducts Small Group Counseling Based on Specific Needs

The highest percentage of both teachers (60.8%, $n = 387$) and administrators (74.3%, $n = 55$) believed that the school counselor should provide this activity, whereas 29.2% of the teachers ($n = 186$) and 18.9% of the administrators ($n = 14$) perceived that both the school counselor and school psychologist should perform this task. In contrast, 8.3% of the teachers ($n = 53$) and 2.7% of the administrators ($n = 2$) perceived that this role belonged to the school psychologist, with 1.7% of the teachers ($n = 11$) and 4.1% of the administrators ($n = 3$) who perceived neither the school counselor nor the school psychologist should perform this task.

Meets individually with students to discuss academic, personal/social, and/or career concerns

The perception of 70.5% of the teachers ($n = 467$) and 73.0% of the administrators ($n = 54$) was that school counselors should perform this activity, whereas 27% of both teachers ($n = 179$) and administrators ($n = 20$) respectively, perceived that both the school counselor and school psychologist should perform this activity. Only 1.7% of the teachers ($n = 11$), and none of the administrators believed this was a school psychologist role, with an additional .8% of the teachers ($n = 5$) and none of the administrators who believed neither professional should assume this task.

Collects and Utilizes Data to Show Job Effectiveness

There were 224 teachers (39.6%) and 34 administrators (48.6%) who indicated that both the school counselor and school psychologist should perform this activity, with 22.5% of the teachers ($n = 127$) and 25.7% of the administrators ($n = 18$) who perceived that it was the school counselor who should collect and utilize data. Of the teachers (21.6%, $n = 122$) and administrators (11.4%, $n = 8$) respectively, it was perceived that the school psychologist should perform this task. However, 16.3% of the teachers ($n = 92$) and 14.3% of the administrators ($n = 10$) perceived neither the school counselor nor school psychologist should perform this task.

Conducts Classroom Guidance Lessons to Proactively Reach Every Student

Among teachers 70.9% ($n = 453$) and administrators (83.8%, $n = 62$) it was perceived that the school counselor should perform this activity, and 11.7% of the teachers ($n = 75$) and 8.1% administrators ($n = 6$) respectively, believed this task should not be performed by either of these professionals. However, none of the administrators and 2.0% of the teachers ($n = 13$) perceived that school psychologists should perform this task, with 15.3% of the teachers ($n = 98$) and 8.1% of the administrators ($n = 6$) who believed that both the school counselor and school psychologist should engage in this task.

Performs Testing and Assessment of Students With Specific Concerns

Of the teachers 65.2% ($n = 422$) and administrators 74.3% ($n = 55$) it was perceived that the school psychologist should perform this activity, whereas 24.7% of the teachers ($n = 160$) and 18.9% of the administrators ($n = 14$) perceived that both professionals should perform this task. Eight percent of the teachers ($n = 52$) and 5.4% of the administrators ($n = 4$) perceived testing and assessment was a school counselor activity, with 2.0% of the teachers ($n = 13$) and 1.4% of the administrators ($n = 1$) who perceived neither professional should perform this task.

Attends Parent Conferences and Team Meetings About Identified Students

Among the teachers 10.4% ($n = 68$) and administrators 2.7%, ($n = 2$) the perception was that school counselors should perform this activity, compared to 18.2% of the teachers ($n = 119$) and 12.3% of the administrators ($n = 9$) who believed this was a school psychologist activity. An additional 70.3% of the teachers ($n = 459$) and 84.9% of the administrators ($n = 62$) perceived both the school counselor and school psychologist should perform this activity, with 1.1% of the teachers ($n = 7$) and none of the administrators perceived not either the school counselor or school psychologist should attend parent conferences and team meetings.

Develops a Master School Schedule

Among teachers (53.7%, $n = 312$) and administrators (66.2%, $n = 49$), the majority believed that neither the school counselor nor school psychologist should develop a master schedule. However, approximately 34.1% of the classroom teachers ($n = 198$) and 33.8% of the administrators ($n = 25$) perceived that this was a task that the school counselor should perform. Sixty-eight teachers (11.7%, $n = 68$) and none of the administrators believed that developing a master school schedule was a task of both the school counselor and school psychologist, with .5% of the teachers ($n = 3$) and none of the administrators who believed this was a task of the school psychologist.

Links Families/Students to Outside Agencies and Resources

There were 70.7% of the teachers ($n = 453$) and 68.1% of the administrators ($n = 49$) who perceived that both the school counselor and school psychologist should connect families and students with agencies and other resources. There were 20.4% teacher respondents ($n = 131$) and 31.9% of the administrators ($n = 23$) who believed it was the school counselor who should perform this task. Furthermore, 6.9% of the teachers ($n = 44$) and none of the administrators believed this was a school psychologist role, with an additional 2.0% of the teachers ($n = 13$) and none of the administrators who believed neither professional should engage in this task.

Assists in Administering Discipline

The largest percentage of both teachers (61.5%, $n = 383$) and administrators (71.2%, $n = 52$) believed that neither professional should engage in administering discipline. However, 21.2% of the teachers ($n = 132$) and 19.2% of the administrators ($n = 14$) perceived that the school counselor should perform this activity. There were 92 teachers (14.8%) and five administrators (6.8%) who perceived that both the school psychologist and school counselor should administer discipline, with 2.6% of the teachers ($n = 16$) and 2.7% of the administrators ($n = 2$) who believed the school psychologist should perform this task.

Discussion and Limitations

The results of this exploratory study revealed that many administrators and teachers were in agreement regarding school counselor and school psychologist tasks. Previous research throughout the decades revealed misperceptions regarding the roles of these professionals with the lack of a shared vision among educators (Finkelstein, 2009; Leuwerke, Walker, & Shi, 2009; Ross, 2005-2006). A discussion of some of the most applicable findings related to previous research is below.

The greatest percentage of teachers and administrators perceived that both the school counselor and school psychologist should take a leadership role in the event of a school crisis. Yet, approximately 24% of the teachers and

administrators did not perceive that either the school counselor or school psychologist should assume this role. Previous research revealed that when the school counselor or school psychologist assumed a leadership position in a school crisis, a strained relationship resulted with the school administrator due to the perception that the school counselor and/or school psychologist was overstepping his/or authority (Wiger & Harowski, 2003). Future studies should focus on the roles of school counselors, school psychologists, and administrators in a crisis event and how roles are determined within the critical incident plan.

In the case of small group counseling, the majority of the teachers and administrators agreed that the school counselor is the professional responsible for conducting group counseling. However, there were some teachers and administrators who believed the school psychologist should also perform this role. This finding contrasts with the results of a study by Brown et al. (2006) in which school counselors agreed to a greater extent than did administrators ($p = .002$) that they were adequately trained to provide group counseling. In this same study, administrators indicated that school psychologists were better trained in group counseling. School counselors can communicate the benefits of group work to administrators and other stakeholders as a strategy for reaching more students time effectively and improving academic achievement (Bostick & Anderson, 2009; Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2007) and behavior related to school performance (Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007).

In response to the question on meeting with individual students to discuss academic, personal/social, and career concerns, teachers and administrators overwhelmingly perceived that this was a school counselor task. The results of this study differ from a study by Monteiro-Leitner, et al. (2006) in which principals wanted counselors to spend less time in the individual counseling role. In the present study, over one-third of both teachers and administrators believed both school counselors and school psychologists should conduct this task, when in fact, school counselors are more extensively trained in counseling skills than are school psychologists. Ideally, students benefit when both the school counselor and school psychologist have an opportunity to meet with each individual student, yet in reality the school psychologist often has the responsibility for many more schools within a district than do school counselors.

Data collection and utilization was not perceived to be an appropriate task of school counselors, school psychologists, or both professions by approximately 60% of the teachers and 51% of the administrators. However, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation requires accurate and efficient measurement to determine "whether or not students are meeting the standards of learning expected of them ..." (NCLB, 2009, p. 1). All educators have a responsibility to identify techniques that improve student success, and collect data that support effective instructional techniques (Ross-Fisher, 2008). Both school counselors and school psychologists are trained in measurement and research strategies, and are able to offer their expertise to teachers in collecting

and analyzing data to demonstrate their contribution to student achievement and the academic mission. For example, action research is a commonly used educational approach to investigate an academic issue. School counselors and school psychologists can engage in an alliance with teachers in identifying an educational dilemma, applying an intervention, and then assessing its effectiveness.

The majority of the teachers and administrators perceived that neither the school counselor nor the school psychologist should develop a master schedule, yet over one-third of the respondents believed this was a school counselor responsibility. Building a master scheduling requires a methodological approach for utilizing and allocating faculty and staff. Although the school counselor has knowledge of academic student needs and requirements for educational transition, serving as a consultant to the administrator is a more appropriate activity, particularly when personnel decisions are made. There could be potential for legal issues when school counselors determine teaching assignments without legitimate authority or educational training in personnel decision-making.

Approximately 39% of the teachers and 31% of the administrators perceived that discipline was a task in which school counselors, school psychologists, or both should be involved. However, discipline is viewed differently among educators. School counselors and school psychologists frequently view discipline as a developmental process in which self-management is learned when students recognize the consequences behind behavior (Kaplan, 1995). Yet, principals and teachers often view discipline as imposing appropriate consequences to inappropriate behaviors (Kaplan, 1995). In this present study, there were still a large number of respondents who believed this was a school counselor responsibility or a task to be shared by both the school counselor and school psychologist. These latter views correspond with the results of a study by Fitch, et al. (2001) in that approximately 28% of pre-professional principals stated that discipline was a school counselor role. Assisting with positive behavior in an educational environment is a task for all educational personnel, yet administering discipline is incompatible to both the school counselor's and school psychologist's position and ethical guidelines (Fitch, et al., 2001).

This preliminary investigation sought to determine teacher and administrator perceptions of school counselors' roles and those of the school psychologist. Researchers may use these results for future follow-up studies with the following limitations to consider. First, the overall return rate was low due to a number of reasons. Employees did not always check their e-mail, some potential participants did not have access to the internet, and in other cases technological problems existed. In addition, the timing of the study coincided with the end of the school year and participants were engaged in other numerous end-of-the-year duties. Another constraint is due to the regional sample of participants. Not only were the respondents from one large school system in a Southern state, the school district is in close proximity to a research university that trains many educational

personnel employed by the school district. This latter factor could be one reason that the views of administrators and teachers were more knowledgeable of appropriate school counselor and school psychologist roles. Future research needs to be conducted at a national level that includes school systems of various sizes and locations. Although the survey design was based on professional standards, literature reviews, analyzed by school counseling and school psychology professionals, and pilot-tested by professionals in each field, instrument psychometric properties need to be analyzed in greater depth.

Implications

The results of this study revealed that the perceptions of administrators and teacher regarding the roles of the school counselor and school psychologist were similar. It is possible that the ASCA, APA, and NASP are making strides in educating stakeholders about the training and education of these professionals. Yet, additional studies need to be conducted to further understand how the roles of school counselors and school psychologists are perceived since previous research revealed misperceptions among teachers and administrators in regard to appropriate roles and tasks of school counselors and school psychologists (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Braden, et al., 2001; Pérusse, et al., 2004). Furthermore, greater clarification is needed to better understand how participants defined instrument items. For instance, in regard to leadership in a school crisis, it is possible that there was confusion regarding the term "leadership." In some school crisis plans various leadership tasks are assigned to designated individuals, which may explain these study results.

There were many respondents who expressed views contrary to the training of school counselors and school psychologists. There continues to be a need for greater communication regarding roles and collaboration among all educational professionals. When there is an effort to partner and define services, outcomes include serving mutually as leaders in systemic change, engaging in collaboration with other educators (Simcox, Nuijens, & Lee, 2006), and delivering services to all students (Santos deBarona & Barona, 2006).

Conclusion

School counselors and school psychologists entered the educational environment due to societal, political, and economic needs. As educational needs changed, more responsibilities were added to the daily tasks already assumed by these professionals. However, legal issues, administrator perceptions, and separate training programs that emphasize different educational paradigms have served as barriers to role misunderstanding.

Ten appropriate and inappropriate tasks identified by the professional learned societies of school counselors and school psychologists served as the basis for this exploratory study. The researchers investigated teachers' and administrators' perceptions regarding the tasks they believed should be performed by the school counselor and/or school psychologist. Although

the results of this preliminary study are encouraging, there were still numerous teachers and administrators who perceived inappropriate tasks were a responsibility of school counselors and/or school psychologists. Additional studies need to be conducted at a national level.

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Table 1

Demographics of Research Participants in Numbers and Percentages

Characteristic	Administrators (38%, <i>n</i> = 75)		Teachers (20%, <i>n</i> = 803)	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Gender				
Male	43	32	16	129
Female	51	38	83	666
Education Level				
Bachelors	0	0	41	329
Masters/Specialist	92	66	56	450
Doctorate	7	5	2	16
Setting				
Pre-school				
Elementary/Intermediate	41	31	47	374
Middle/Junior High	32	24	19	151
High School	20	15	31	249
Teaching Area				
General Education	_____		74	593
Special Education	_____		14	112
Special Area	_____		12	98

Note. Not all percentages add up to 100% due to not all individuals responding to these items.

Table 2

Overall Percentages of Teacher and Administrator Responses Regarding Perceptions of Professional Who Should Perform the Task

	School Counselor	School Psychologist	Neither	Both
Leadership Crisis				
Teachers	32.2	8.7	23.5	35.6
Administrators	29.7	5.4	24.3	40.5
Group Counseling				
Teachers	60.8	8.3	1.7	29.2
Administrators	74.3	2.7	4.1	18.9
Individual Concerns				
Teachers	70.5	1.7	.8	27.0
Administrators	73.0	.0	.0	27.0
Data				
Teachers	22.5	21.6	16.3	39.6
Administrators	25.7	11.4	14.3	48.6
Classroom Guidance				
Teachers	70.9	2.0	11.7	15.3
Administrators	83.8	.0	8.1	8.1
Testing/Assessment				
Teachers	8.0	65.2	2.0	24.7
Administrators	5.4	74.3	1.4	18.9
Conferences/Meetings				
Teachers	10.4	18.2	1.1	70.3
Administrators	2.7	12.3	.0	84.9
Master Schedule				
Teachers	34.1	.5	53.7	11.7
Administrators	33.8	.0	66.2	.0
Agencies/Resources				
Teachers	20.4	6.9	2.0	70.7
Administrators	31.9	.0	.0	68.1
Discipline				
Teachers	21.2	2.6	61.5	14.8
Administrators	19.2	2.7	71.2	6.8

School Counseling Students' Perceptions of Their Practicum Experiences and Site Supervision

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Practicum is a required and integral course in every credentialed counselor training program. However, little is known about how school counselors-in-training go through this supervised clinical process. This mixed method study examined students' perceptions of practicum experiences and site supervision in a masters-degree school counselor program. Analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data show that participants ($N=185$) reported overwhelmingly positive experiences in the overall set-up, specific activities, and on-site supervision of their practicum. Results also identified areas for improving students' practicum experiences. They include more exposure to diversity and multicultural issues; more activities in report writing, career preparation counseling, staff meeting and conferencing, and integrating more counseling theory in classroom discussion with the practicum students. Future research and implications are discussed.

The counseling practicum is a required course in every credentialed counselor training program (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2001). The practicum provides counselors-in-training a supervised experience to apply counseling theory in one-on-one interactions in school settings. Typically, the interactions are audio-video taped and the practicum students are required to develop a client log, tentative counseling plan, and case notes for each client. The practicum students are also required to provide indirect services to support the client in assessment, program planning and evaluation, leadership activities, community collaboration and intervention, etc. (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Cuccaro & Casey, 2002; Wood & Rayle, 2006).

In addition to practicing direct and indirect services, the practicum students must attend weekly classes and individual supervisory sessions with their course instructor on campus. The purpose of supervision is to assist the practicum students in developing appropriate and effective intervention and treatment methodologies specific to client's contextual and multicultural needs. The completion of a supervised practicum is a requirement for earning a graduate degree in Professional Counseling across accredited programs in the United States (CACREP, 2001; Wood & Rayle, 2006). Examining the effectiveness of the practicum experience is important for enhancing learning and professional development for the students and improving counselor education programs. The present study examined the practicum experience from the students' perspective. The purpose of this study was to generate empirical evidence to assess effectiveness of a school counselor training program and evaluate utility of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (ASCA, 2005) of school counselor education.

The practicum experience is important in the training of school counselors for the following aspects. First, the practicum experience is an important period of transition and professional growth for school counselors-in-training. Essentially, practicum provides the students with their first opportunity to have repeated interactions with clients and apply theoretical knowledge in practice (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Burkner & Carone, 2007). The practicum experience enables the students to strengthen knowledge and skills they have acquired and detect areas of needed further development in order to become a professional school counselor (Woodside, Ziegler, & Paulus, 2009).

Secondly, the practicum process provides opportunities for counselors-in-training to reflect on their performances. Through reflection, they can develop an understanding that "the practicum experience is a complex developmental process in which counselors-in-training come to terms with 'learnability,' because the greater part of useful understanding is implicit and involves applied know-how and explicit and basic knowledge" (Lewis, 2004, p. 96). Through their continuous efforts, the

practicum students may better understand such practical issues, develop relevant counseling skills, and become more competent as professional counselors.

Thirdly, the practicum provides counselors-in-training with opportunities to work with site supervisors who serve as their guides in practicum. Practicum students' abilities to receive criticism constructively and reflect on feedback is important in developing a productive student-supervisor relationship and helping the students become competent counselors (Gross, 2005; Haas, Lally, Mische, & Pérusse, 2009). Through reflection and debriefing with the supervisor, the practicum students gradually learn to be more comfortable with their role as a counselor and competent in using various counseling strategies.

Finally, the practicum provides opportunities for students to work with clients of diverse and multicultural backgrounds. The early exposure provides opportunities for students to learn how to deal with issues in diverse situations (Smith, Ng, Brinson, & Mityagin, 2008). More importantly, it allows students to experience an active learning environment and learn in ways that mirror their professional lives after they graduate. Previous research suggests that if a student works only with a homogenous population, the benefit of that learning environment is severely limited (Burker & Carone, 2007). Research also shows that multi-cultural exposure is promoted through an experiential and diverse context of an appropriate practicum placement (Chao, Wei, & Flores 2011; Dickson & Jepsen, 2007).

Approximately a decade ago, Bradley and Fiorini (1999) reported an alarming observation that more than 70% of the counselor training programs required no multicultural training prior to practicum. They posited that students' inability to deal with cultural barriers can lead to frustration of the students and their supervisors, as well as client dissatisfaction. To address this important issue, CACREP (2001) mandated a portion of the direct service training hours to working with clients from diverse and underrepresented populations. Recent research shows that students, who are highly aware of multicultural concerns within their supervision experiences and overall program, report a heightened sense of multicultural awareness and knowledge (Dickson & Jepsen, 2007). Similarly, Fouad (2006) suggested that essential components of a successful practicum experience include curriculum and supervision that facilitate student awareness of personal cultural biases and multi-culturally centered approaches to intervention.

Despite the effort in implementing the ASCA National Model, empirical data concerning the training experiences of school counselors-in-training is limited. The present study addressed this gap by using students' feedback to assess effectiveness of the practicum in a school counselor training program. The purpose was to examine students' perceptions of their practicum experiences and site supervision, assess effectiveness of the program, and identify areas for future improvement. This bottom-up approach of program evaluation is consistent with the data-based decision making and problem-solving approach in

counselor training (ASCA, 2005; CACREP, 2001; Wood & Rayle, 2006). Examining students' feedback on their practicum experiences allowed us to assess the expectations and actual training experience from their perspective. The results would reveal the challenges they encountered through their first hands-on experience in counseling. The results can also be useful to improve the practicum as well as the school counselor education programs in other parts of the country.

Specifically, the present study examined three areas regarding students' perceptions of their practicum experiences and site supervision. The first area focused on the students' perception of the overall set-up of the practicum experience. The assessment focused on the following aspects: (1) amount of on-site supervision, (2) quality and usefulness of on-site supervision, (3) relevance of experience to professional goals, (4) orientation to site goals, policies, and procedures, (5) adequacy of site facilities such as space and supplies, (6) exposure to ethnic, lifestyle, demographic diversity, and (7) support and encouragement from supervisors.

The second area of our assessment focused on the adequacy of specific activities which students engaged in during the practicum. Investigating students' perceptions in this area provides a unique way to assess the extent that the practicum achieved this purpose (McCutchen, 2008). Our assessment of students' perceptions of adequacy focused on nine specific activities that students engaged in during the practicum. These activities ranged from intake interviewing, individual and group counseling, to participation in staff meetings and conferences.

The third area of our assessment focused on students' perceptions of the on-site supervision during the practicum. This feedback helps identify strengths of the field site supervision as well as problems to be addressed. For instance, an issue of concern for many counselor training programs was that practicum students felt they did not receive adequate or contractually stipulated weekly time with supervisors throughout practicum (Gross, 2005; Harper & Ritchie, 2009; Studer, 2005). Obtaining such feedback makes it possible to create a productive working environment for the practicum students and improve the supervisor-supervisee relationship during practicum (Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007).

More specifically, our assessment focused on two aspects of student perceptions on the quality of their on-site supervision. One aspect assessed student perceptions on how their site supervisors functioned in activities such as observing student counseling sessions, providing constructive feedback, and fairly applying criteria to evaluate student work. The other aspect focused on how their site supervisors helped the practicum students develop knowledge and skills through activities by using new and different techniques, making sound ethical decisions, and encouraging professionalism.

In summary, the present study addressed the following research questions: How did students perceive the overall set-up of their field site experience? How did students perceive adequacy of specific activities they engaged in during the practicum

experience? How did students perceive the quality of their on-site supervision? What were other factors (e.g., teaching experience, field site settings, and timing of placement) which influenced students' practicum experience?

Method

Participants

Participants of the present study included 185 graduate students in a master's degree, school counseling program at a medium-size university in the southeastern United States. The students were required to respond to a series of evaluation questionnaires during the program. Their archived responses to two survey questionnaires concerning their perceptions of practicum experiences and site supervision provided data for the study. Of the 185 participants, 174 were female, 10 male, and one did not report gender. Their mean age was 31 years with a range from 23 to 59 years old. Seventy-eight (41.7%) participants reported having teaching experience in schools prior to practicum, while 99 (52.9%) had no teaching experience and ten (6%) did not identify. Among these participants, 78 (41.7%) were placed in elementary school, 52 (27.8%) in middle school, and 45 (24.1%) in high school for their practicum. In addition, 11 participants (6.9%) were placed in high school/early college preparation, psycho-educational (SPED) program, Christian school, alternative school, and school for the deaf. Their practicum placement sites were collapsed into one category and labeled as *other*. The years of the practicum placements ranged from 1997 to 2008, with 20 (10.7%) participants from 1997 through 2001 and the remaining 165 (89.3%) from 2002 through 2008. Seventy-two (38.5%) participants had practicum in the spring semester, while the remaining 113 (61.5%) did so in the Fall semester.

Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

Two evaluation survey questionnaires were developed to examine students' perceptions of the practicum experience, as no established instrument was found that suited the purpose of this study. The questions were based on the national standards (ASCA, 2005; CACREP, 2001) and a review of the [recent literature](#) (e.g., Bradley & Fiorini 1999; Fouad, 2006; Gross, 2005; Putney, McCullough, & Worthington, 1992; Studer, 2005). The questionnaires were validated by faculties in the Counseling department and the CACREP site visit teams.

One questionnaire was called *Student Evaluation of Field Site Experience*. The participants were instructed to use a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent, 6 = N/A) to rate their practicum experiences through two sets of questions. The first set of questions contained eight items (Table 1, 1-7 and 9) that asked students to evaluate the overall set-up of their practicum sites. The second set of questions also included eight items (Table 2, 8a-8h) that asked students to evaluate the specific activities they engaged in during the practicum. Question 8i was labeled as "Other" for students to write in their additional

practicum experiences. At the bottom of the questionnaire, students were encouraged to write up additional comments and suggestions for improvement of the practicum experience. This questionnaire proved to be internally consistent with an acceptable Cronbach's α of .66 for the present study.

The other questionnaire was called *Student Evaluation of Field Site Supervision*. The participants were instructed to use a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent) to evaluate their practicum site supervision experiences through two sets of questions (Table 3). The first set of questions contained six items, which asked students to evaluate actions of their site supervisors. Sample items of this set include, "Gives useful feedback" and "Fairly applies criteria for evaluating my work." The second set of questions included nine items, which asked students to evaluate how their site supervisors helped them develop knowledge and skills through the practicum. Sample items include: "Encourage use of new and different techniques" and "Helps me schedule an adequate number of clients." Space was also provided after Question 15 to write additional comments. This questionnaire proved to be internally consistent with a high Cronbach's α of .94 for the present study. Both the evaluation questionnaires were completed immediately after the participants completed the practicum.

Results

Descriptive and parametric statistics were used to analyze participants' responses to the evaluation questionnaires completed at the end of the practicum. Participants' responses to Question 1-7 and 9 on the *Student Evaluation of Field Site Experience* questionnaire (Table 1) were examined to address the first research question about their perceptions of the overall set-up of the practicum. Table 1 shows a majority of the participants rated "Excellent" in all eight areas of the overall set-up of the practicum. Their ratings ranged from the lowest (86%) on "Adequacy of Site Facilities" to the highest (95.5%) on "Relevance of Experience to Professional Goals." Moreover, 178 participants (96%) rated "Excellent" or "Good" in their "Overall Assessment of the Site". However, 16 participants (9%) also rated "Poor" in the area of "Exposure to Ethnic, Lifestyle, and Demographic Diversity".

Participants' responses to Question 8a to 8h on the *Student Evaluation of Field Site Experience* questionnaire (Table 2) were examined to address the second research question, concerning their engagement in specific activities during the practicum. Table 2 shows a majority of the participants rated "Excellent" in their engagement in all eight specific activities. Their ratings ranged from the lowest (84%) on "Experience of Report Writing and Experience of Staff Meeting/Conferences" adequacy, to the highest (96.5%) on "Individual Counseling". Yet, a few participants (4-5%) rated "Poor" in the areas of Report Writing, Group Counseling, Guidance Activities, Career Preparation, and Staff Meeting/Conferences.

Participants' responses to the *Student Evaluation of Field Site Supervision* questionnaire (Table 3) were examined to address the third research question about the perceived quality of the on-site supervision during the practicum. Table 3 shows a majority of the participants rated "Excellent" in all areas of the on-site supervision. Their ratings ranged from the lowest (73%) on "Observes and/or reviews tapes of my sessions" to the highest (95%) on "Encourages my professional development and behavior". Still, a few participants rated "Poor" on their on-site supervision. These areas included "observes and/or review tapes of my sessions" for 17 participants (19%), "discusses theoretical approaches to my work" for 13 participants (7%), and clearly explains criteria for evaluating my work" for 12 participants (6%).

One-way ANOVA was used to address the fourth research question. Four hypotheses were tested to examine whether gender, prior teaching experience, field site settings, and timing of placement influenced students' evaluation of the practicum experiences. The results show that neither gender nor prior teaching experience made a significant difference in their responses to all the assessment questions. The third hypothesis examined whether the field placement setting (i.e., elementary school, middle school, high school, and other alternative schools) influenced participants' perceptions of the practicum experiences. This analysis revealed no significant difference among the four placement settings on all the evaluation questions, except Question 8f (Table 2) concerning engagement in specific activities related to career preparation during the practicum. A significant difference ($F_{(3,179)} = 11.34, p = .000, \eta^2 = .16$) was found among the participants in different placement settings. Students placed in high school for practicum ($M = 4.58, SD = .92$) reported significantly higher ratings than those in the middle schools ($M = 2.94, SD = 2.03$) and elementary schools ($M = 2.67, SD = 2.07$) in providing career preparation.

The fourth hypothesis tested whether timing of the practicum placement (spring vs. fall semester) influenced participants' evaluation of the practicum experiences. The results found no significant difference in the evaluation of practicum between the students placed in the spring and those in the fall semester, except for Question 11--"Helps me schedule an adequate number of clients"--on the *Student Evaluation of Field Site Supervision* questionnaire. The students doing practicum in the fall semester ($M = 4.64, SD = .79$) reported significantly higher ratings ($F_{(3,175)} = 4.92, p = .028, \eta^2 = .03$) than those in the spring semester ($M = 4.31, SD = 1.21$).

Finally, participants' written responses to the open-ended questions on the two survey questionnaires were examined to complement the above quantitative results. Open-coding procedures were used to sort, code, and identify themes of participants' written responses (Glaser, 1992). The coding and themes were cross-checked by two authors to ensure reliability of the codes and themes gleaned across the participants. Of the 185 participants responding to the *Student Evaluation of Field Site Experience*, 26 provided written comments on the practicum experience. Thirteen comments pertain to the overall practicum

experience, with seven comments describing the experience as “enjoyable”, “great”, or “wonderful”. The remaining six comments described the school staffs or counselors as “warm and helpful”. The participants also shared six comments on benefits of the practicum experiences (e.g., “became more culturally sensitive”, “got to observe or experience many aspects of school counseling”, and “got to work independently”).

The participants also provided 14 comments on limitations of the practicum experiences, including “limited accessibility to the site supervisors”, “excessive paper-work demands”, and “a disproportionate amount of time with students in Time-Out, thus limiting the experience with other students”. Two comments were concerned with the principal’s strictness with the counselor’s time and limitations of doing practicum one day per week. One student felt awkward because the site supervisor was not informed that she was assigned a practicum student.

In addition, participants offered suggestions to improve the practicum experiences. Four comments expressed a desire for more experience in specific areas (e.g., “I would have liked to work with groups and did more classroom guidance activities... I would also have liked to sit in on some SST meetings”). Four suggestions pointed to the procedure and logistics issues. One such comment indicated, “I would suggest that the next counseling student start with a Needs Assessment early on (by week 3), so that the ball gets rolling on seeing individuals and forming a small group(s). ... Also, I suggest claiming a ‘file cabinet drawer’ as your space so you can bring in/store supplies (crayons, paper, etc.).”

Of the 185 participants responding to the *Student Evaluation of Field Site Supervision*, 54 provided written comments on the site supervision. Most comments show that the participants reported their site supervisors overwhelmingly were “wonderful” and “enjoyed working with.” They used phrases such as “learned a lot,” “given support,” and “guidance” to describe the benefits from the site supervisors. One commented on her supervisor: “Marlene is under enormous pressure. She was very good at giving me realistic expectations of what it’s like for counselors in Magnolia County (all names are pseudonyms). The whole experience was very real. No fluffy, pie-in-the-sky visions of what it is like. I appreciated it very much.”

The participants also commented on the limitations of the site supervision. Most of these comments expressed their desire for having more time to “continue learning at this site” and “spend with [supervisor] to discuss cases and therapy in general.” Some comments were related to the status and background in counseling of the supervisors. “I evaluated the Ed.S. students who provided supervision. In the future, I think it would be more helpful to pair a school counselor with school counseling students instead of putting community and school together.” Furthermore, a few comments described accessibility of the supervisor. “This is a good site. My greatest criticism is accessibility of the site supervisor. I generally had to track her down.” Some comments pointed to the lack of responses from the supervisor. “The site supervisor did not review tapes. She was

notified and explained in detail about every session." "They were very helpful. However, a lot of my work was done independently."

Discussion and Implications

The present study examined students' perceptions of the practicum experiences and site supervision in a school counselor training program that aimed providing necessary training for school counselors in real-life school settings (ASCA, 2005; Cuccaro & Casey, 2002). Quantitative and qualitative data were used to examine the practicum students' experience interacting with clients, applying counseling theories in real life scenarios, and working with supervisors and staff in schools (Haas et al., 2009; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007). The data were collected over 10 years, as part of the requirement of a school counselor education program in which the practicum students were asked to evaluate and reflect on their practicum experience (CACREP, 2001). Examining students' evaluations and reflections provided student accounts of the practicum experiences, a particular data source for program evaluation and feedback for improvement of the counselor training program.

The present study addressed four research questions concerning participants' perceptions of the overall set-up of the field site experience, the specific activities they engaged in, quality of the site supervision during the practicum, and factors that influenced their evaluation of the practicum experience. Results to the first research question show that 95% of the practicum students rated the overall set-up of the practicum experience as excellent. They reported high ratings in the area of adequacy of site facilities, orientation to site goals, policies, and procedures, quality and usefulness of on-site supervision, and relevance of experience to professional goals. These results, together with participants' written comments, suggest that the overall set-up at the practicum sites was consistent with student expectations.

These findings confirmed the importance of ensuring school counseling students understand the purpose of practicum. One of the reasons that the practicum experience failed to meet students' expectations was due to a lack of knowing what they will be expected to do at a specific site (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Cuccaro & Casey, 2002). Clear communication of the expectations of their responsibilities during practicum would help reduce unpreparedness and anxiety among the practicum students (Gross, 2005). Also, it is imperative for students to understand that their practicum is not supposed to be a perfect process. Facing the challenges and learning how to solve problems in the real world, as a school counselor, is one of the purposes of the practicum (Fitch & Marshall, 2002; Harper & Ritchie, 2009).

At the same time, Table 1 also shows that 16 participants rated "Poor" in the area of Exposure to Ethnic, Lifestyle, and Demographic Diversity during practicum. Although this evaluation involved a small proportion of the participants (9%), this finding presented an issue that deserves further discussion. Existing research stressed the importance of training school counselors in a

real-life environment in which the practicum students can learn skills to work with multi-cultural background clients (Burker & Carone, 2007; Harper & Ritchie, 2009). Chao, Wei, and Flores (2011) suggested a wider variety of training, such as taking courses, conducting research projects, and participating in workshops, to deepen multicultural training with ethnic/racial minorities who have different needs than Whites.

For the present study, the practicum sites spread around a major metropolitan area in the southeast United States, which consists of multi-cultural background populations. However, our finding suggests that a rich multi-cultural population was not a guarantee for adequate multi-cultural training, and that the lack of multi-cultural training needs to be addressed even before practicum, a common shortcoming for 70% of the counselor training programs (Bradley & Fiorini 1999). This finding suggests that more efforts are needed to implement the CACREP mandates of direct service training hours for the practicum students to work with counseling clients from diverse and underrepresented populations. Providing more supervised clinical hours at outreach services for underserved populations might promote students' cultural knowledge. To achieve this purpose, counselor training programs need to enhance multicultural skills training and evaluation in practicum, and more importantly, to develop a standard to assess specific multicultural awareness, skills, and knowledge needed within practicum (Dickson & Jepsen, 2007).

Results of the second research question show that a majority of the practicum students reported an excellent experience of engaging in specific activities during the practicum. Most participants reported (Table 2) having an excellent experience in individual counseling (96.5%) and intake interviewing (89%). These findings suggest that the practicum fulfilled its primary purpose of providing the students with opportunities to apply theory in real-life counseling practice (Cuccaro & Casey, 2002; Wood & Rayle, 2006). Students' feedback like these provided evidence about the strengths of the practicum. More importantly, students' feedback revealed areas for the program improvement. Our data show that participants' ratings of the specific activities were lower on average than their ratings of the overall set-up of the practicum. A small proportion of the participants rated "Poor" for their experience in career preparation (5%), staff meetings and conferences (4%), guidance activities (4%), and report writing (4%). These findings suggest the need to explain students' unproductive experiences in these areas. One way to prevent and reduce fears, worries, and other negative responses about their initial counseling experiences among the practicum students is to establish clear expectations and help the students develop specific personalized skills (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Fitch & Marshall, 2002). More efforts or course work may be included in the counselor training program prior to or during the practicum (Fouad, 2006; Harper & Ritchie, 2009; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007; Studer, 2005).

Similarly, results of the third research question show that most participants had satisfactory experience with their site supervision. A small proportion of them (Table 3) rated "Poor" in the on-site supervision in the area of: "observing and reviewing

tapes of my sessions" (9%), "discussing theoretical approaches to my work" (7%), and "clearly explaining criteria for evaluating my work" (6%). These findings are consistent with the current research on the practicum experience in school counselor training (Cuccaro & Casey, 2002; Wood & Rayle, 2006). They suggest that gaps exist between student expectations and their real-life experiences during the practicum. Students need to learn how to work with the site supervisors in order to obtain needed attention. At the same time, the site supervisors need to pay more attention in relating theoretical concepts when they help the practicum students with specific cases on hand (Studer, 2005). It is important to note that while the ASCA National Model does not provide specific guidelines regarding supervision within practicum, having quality supervision throughout counselor training, including practicum, is critical to meet the contemporary demands of the K-12 environment and the needs of students (Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007). Practicum experiences that do not facilitate appropriate professional relationships may decrease school counselor candidate effectiveness in serving students (Haas et al., 2009).

In addition to the descriptive results, four hypotheses were tested to examine factors that might affect students' perceptions of the practicum experiences. Results of the first hypothesis revealed no significant difference on the perceptions of practicum experiences between the males and females participants. This result was not a surprise since this study involved a small number of male participants. Future study needs to use a larger balanced sample to address questions: Is there a difference in the perception of the practicum experience between female and male practicum students? Is there a difference in the perception of the practicum experience when a male practicum student is supervised by a female site supervisor or vice versa?

The test of the second hypothesis yielded a surprise finding that prior school teaching experience did not make a difference on practicum students' perceptions of the practicum experiences. This result did not support our hypothesis that previous teaching experience and familiarity of the school environment would influence participants' perceptions of their practicum experiences. This finding is valuable information for both counselor educators and counselors-in-training, in that it speaks to the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are unique for school counselors (ASCA, 2005; Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Burkner & Carone, 2007; Haas et al., 2009; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007). Even though school teachers and school counselors both work in school, each group functions as a related but a different type of professionals. Becoming a school counselor calls for different responsibilities and experience from those of a school teacher. School counseling students with prior teaching experience in school may still face the same challenges of transforming themselves into school counselors as those without such experience.

Our results supported the third hypothesis and showed that participants' perceptions of the practicum experiences varied significantly among different field placement settings. This finding was expected simply because the practicum students placed in high schools had more opportunity to work with students who need assistance with career decisions than those placed in other school settings. This finding shows that the practicum achieved its purpose in providing practicum students with opportunities to meet different needs of the clients in different settings.

Again, the fourth hypothesis yielded a surprise result that participants' perceptions of the on-site supervision differed significantly from spring to fall semester, in the area of--"Helps me schedule an adequate number of clients". This finding suggests that there might be more opportunities for the practicum students to meet with supervisors and obtain referrals at the beginning rather than in the middle of a school year. Future research may investigate the following question: How do differences between spring and fall semester in availability of school age children, curricular and test schedules, and administrative agendas impact student practicum experience?

In summary, both our quantitative and qualitative data show that the participants reported a positive experience with the overall set-up, specific activities engaged, and the on-site supervision they received during the practicum. Our findings were inconsistent with Gross (2005) observation that counseling students' assessment of actual practicum experience was consistently negative. The negative assessment that the practicum experiences do not meet student expectations, that students felt particularly unprepared for the supervisor/supervisee relationship, and that they do not receive adequate time with supervisor throughout practicum was reported by a small proportion of the participants, but did not emerge as a major theme from our data. While students' positive feedback encouraged us to maintain the strengths of the counselor education program, the results helped us identify areas to improve students' practicum experience. Our results support the contention that examining student feedback is an efficient way to alleviate problems of the practicum process (Burker & Carone, 2007). For instance, based on students' feedback, our future practicum placement could include a wider range of the practicum sites so that the overall set-up of the practicum includes more exposure to ethnic, lifestyle, and demographic diversity for the practicum students. In addition, more specific activities could be arranged to develop skills for the practicum students in report writing, career preparation counseling, and participation in staff meeting and conferencing. On-site supervisors could be encouraged more in relating counseling theory in their discussions with the practicum students, being more explicit in explaining criteria for evaluating student work, and providing more time to observe and review tapes of student counseling sessions.

The present results need to be used with caution due to limitations of the study. Our study was limited to students' perceptions of the practicum experiences in one master's degree program for school counselors. The results were program-

specific and may not be generalized to other populations and settings. The present results are preliminary in nature. Clearly, future studies that include a larger sample size with more male participants and across multiple sites are needed to gain insights of students' practicum experience and improve school counselor training programs. Such observations should include self-report data as well as objective measures throughout the practicum rather than only at the end of the practicum. In addition to addressing these design issues, future research can look into the interactions between practicum students and on-site supervisors to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the practicum. In particular, future research can focus on students' emotional responses, such as anxiety, stress, and worries associated with the practicum experience, so that the students can be better helped with developing coping skills during this unique hands-on experience in the training of school counselors. Furthermore, identifying the levels, sources, and types of interactions may generate invaluable information to address the behavioral, psychological, and social-emotional aspects of the practicum experience and make the practicum a more productive experience for the students.

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Table 1

Student Evaluation of the Overall Set-up of their Field Site Experience: Question 1-7 & 9

	Question	Poor	--	Excellent
		1-2	3	4-5
Q1	Amount of on-site supervision (<i>n</i> = 184)	3 (2%)	19 (10%)	162 (88%)
Q2	Quality and usefulness of on-site supervision (<i>n</i> = 185)	1 (.5%)	15 (8%)	169 (91.5%)
Q3	Relevance of experience to professional goals (<i>n</i> = 184)	1 (.5%)	8 (4%)	175 (95.5%)
Q4	Orientation to site goals, policies, & procedures (<i>n</i> = 184)	3 (2%)	19 (10%)	162 (88%)
Q5	Adequacy of site facilities (<i>n</i> = 185)	3(2%)	22 (12%)	160 (86%)
Q6	Exposure to ethnic, lifestyle, demographic diversity (<i>n</i> = 184)	16 (9%)	26 (14%)	142 (87%)
Q7	Support & encouragement (<i>n</i> = 182)	1 (.5%)	10 (5.5%)	171 (94%)
Q9	Overall assessment of site (<i>n</i> = 178)		9 (5%)	169 (95%)

Table 2

Student Evaluation of the Specific Activities of their Field Site Experience: Question 8a-8h

	Question	Poor	--	Excellent
		1-2	3	4-5
Q8a	Experience of intake interviewing (<i>n</i> = 130)	1 (.5%)	18 (10%)	111 (89%)
Q8b	Experience of report writing (<i>n</i> = 185)	6 (4%)	22 (12%)	93 (84%)
Q8c	Experience of individual counseling (<i>n</i> = 184)	1 (.5%)	6 (3%)	177 (96.5%)
Q8d	Experience of group counseling (<i>n</i> = 156)	8 (4.3%)	19 (10%)	129 (85%)
Q8e	Experience of guidance activities (<i>n</i> = 102)	7 (4%)	14 (8%)	81 (86%)
Q8f	Experience of career preparation (<i>n</i> = 143)	9 (5%)	19 (10%)	115 (85%)
Q8g	Experience of consultation/collaboration/referrals (<i>n</i> = 172)	3 (2%)	23 (12%)	146 (86%)
Q8h	Experience of staff meetings/conferences (<i>n</i> = 167)	8 (4%)	22 (12%)	137 (84%)

Table 3

Student Evaluation of Field Site Experience: Question 1-15

	Questions On Supervision	Poor	--	Excellent
		1-2	3	4-5
Q1	Observes and/or reviews tapes of my sessions (<i>n</i> = 170)	17(9%)	33 (18%)	116 (73%)
Q2	Gives useful feedback (<i>n</i> = 177)		18 (10%)	159 (90%)
Q3	Encourages use of new and different techniques (<i>n</i> = 177)	5 (3%)	11 (6%)	160 (91%)
Q4	Suggests ideas for developing my professional skills (<i>n</i> = 177)	5 (3%)	11 (6%)	161 (91%)
Q5	Helps me define and achieve concrete goals for my clinical experience (<i>n</i> = 176)	7 (4%)	25 (13%)	143 (83%)
Q6	Encourages/listens to my ideas for skill development (<i>n</i> = 177)	1 (.5%)	11 (6%)	165 (93.5%)
Q7	Helps me make sound ethical decisions (<i>n</i> = 177)	1 (.5%)	9 (5%)	167 (94.5%)
Q8	Encourages my professional development and behavior (<i>n</i> = 177)	2 (1%)	8 (4%)	167 (95%)
Q9	Offers resource information (<i>n</i> = 177)	4 (2%)	11 (6%)	162 (92%)
Q10	Helps me understand site policies and procedures (<i>n</i> = 177)	4 (2%)	11 (6%)	162 (92%)
Q11	Helps me schedule an adequate number of clients (<i>n</i> = 177)	8 (4%)	10 (5%)	157 (91%)
Q12	Discusses theoretical approaches to my work (<i>n</i> = 177)	13 (7%)	27 (14%)	135 (79%)
Q13	Encourages me to evaluate my own work (<i>n</i> = 177)	5 (3%)	14 (8%)	157 (89%)
Q14	Clearly explains criteria for evaluating my work (<i>n</i> = 176)	12 (6%)	16 (9%)	146 (85%)
Q15	Fairly applies criteria for evaluating my work (<i>n</i> = 175)	7 (4%)	10 (6%)	158 (90%)

Helping Counseling Students Develop Effective Time Management Strategies

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Graduate counseling programs entail a great deal of work that can negatively affect the welfare and wellness of students. Although researchers have reported the issues that influence the wellness of counseling students, literature lacks relating to how students and educators use time management strategies to help counseling students manage their schedules. Effective use of time management skills can help counseling students feel in control of their workload and maintain their wellness. Both counseling students and counselor educators have a responsibility to understand the essentialness of using time management strategies as a significant element of self-care.

In an era when electronic devices allow for constant connectivity, today individuals operate on a whirlwind, twenty-four hours a day, seven-days a week schedule, where new obligations can appear via e-mail, phone, or text at any moment. The stress that can accompany one's overloaded and constantly changing schedule can be exacerbated among counseling students who are struggling to achieve a balance amongst self-care, school assignments, work schedules, and personal relationships; all while learning to care for the mental health of others. The paradoxical image of an overwhelmed, highly exhausted counseling student, compared to the calm, congruent counselor these students are striving to become, highlights the necessity of helping counseling students achieve balance among the many demands affecting them during their graduate program. As a support and influence to these efforts, counselor educators may also consider renewing their own awareness of the ways in which time management affects student success.

A number of studies have investigated the relationship between counselor impairment and overextended workload (Lawson, 2007; Lawson & Myers, 2011). Lawson and Myers detected that whenever counselors do not engage in routine and effective self-care practices, the associated negative physical and mental consequences impair the quality of services delivered to clients. Although counseling students may not currently be practicing within the mental health field, these students represent future professionals who are actively learning about the demands of working as mental health counselors while negotiating the large workload that comes with graduate-level coursework. Counseling programs are a time for students to learn about becoming the best future professionals they can be. Therefore, counselor educators promote counseling student success when they take on their responsibility to create a learning environment emphasizing effective self-care.

Despite research supporting the use of time management strategies as a way to help individuals regain control of their overscheduled calendars (König, van Eerde, & Burch, 2010), there has been less attention devoted to how time management strategies can help minimize the negative impact that accompanies overextended counseling students (Northcraft, Schmidt, & Ashford, 2011). Although trained to develop behavioral plans to help clients more effectively manage their time, counseling students too often neglect the same consideration to themselves. When considering the issue of time management and the demands placed on counseling students, organizing multiple roles and obligations effectively can appear daunting. However, effective time management strategies can be instrumental in helping students regain control of their schedules. Although this seems a logical progression towards improving the welfare of counseling students, there is little empirically based research that offer findings and strategies to assist counseling students in mastering time management. The purpose of this manuscript is to review contemporary literature on time management and provide suggestions indicating how the findings may apply to counseling students and counselor educators. While counseling students have the ultimate responsibility to manage their schedules, counselor educators can be essential in helping students understand the importance of time management and to offer strategies that can help students achieve their time management goals.

Factors Impeding Time Management Strategies

A growing body of literature devoted to investigating factors that promote or impede time management strategies has grown from the prevalence of individuals struggling to effectively manage their time (DeVoe & Pfeffer, 2011; Peeters & Rutte, 2005; Schmidt & DeShon, 2007). Most recently, researchers have combined time and priority management within the same construct, arguing that part of the struggle in effectively developing successful strategies is allocating time and resources in a way that is commensurate with priorities (Peeters & Rutte). What has emerged is a representation of incentives, task importance, and deadlines as significant mediators of time management.

Incentives

Researchers (Schmidt & DeShon, 2007) identified the use of incentives as one of the most significant factors influencing how individuals prioritize tasks. Schmidt and DeShon found that individuals account for more time to tasks that result in incentives, typically in the form of monetary compensation, compared to tasks in which they did not receive incentives. Researchers identified feedback incentives as powerful contributions for increasing the salience of an assignment and, thus its priority (Northcraft et al., 2011; Schmidt & DeShon). Northcraft and colleagues found that the expectation of receiving timely and quality feedback significantly influences the perceived importance of a task. This reinforcement helps individuals to identify a strong sense of commitment to the task and the desire to receive positive feedback; giving feedback in a timely manner strengthens this reinforcement. These findings may be particularly relevant to graduate students whose academic investment provides no immediate reinforcement. Although counseling students may strive to receive high ratings from counselor educators, the delayed nature of these incentives can decrease students' motivations for completing the tasks in a timely manner; thus discouraging the use of effective time management strategies.

Competing Tasks

While incentives may provide a more obvious indication as to which tasks receive higher priority than others, Northcraft et al. (2011) more specifically addressed how individuals resolve time pressures when no one task has greater incentives than another. This is an important consideration for counseling students working to complete equally weighted academic assignments. When assignments were equivalent in nature as well as in the incentives received upon completion, Northcraft et al. found students work towards the goal in which they had made the least progress. DeVoe and Pfeffer (2011) clarified these findings by explaining that as time becomes more limited, greater value is assigned to that time. Therefore, people tend to invest energy in those tasks that result in a greater sense of productivity. Especially as individuals enter the workplace, they think of time increasingly in terms of charge per hour; thus, they assign monetary values, subconsciously or consciously, to tasks, thereby increasing one's desire to effectively use one's time (DeVoe & Pfeffer).

Deadlines

As illustrated by DeVoe and Pfeffer (2011), time pressure increases a person's perceived value of time. As with anything significantly valued, when a person feels that s/he is not using time wisely or productively, s/he experiences negative psychological stress (DeVoe & Pfeffer; Peeters & Rutte, 2005). The use of time management strategies can help individuals safeguard their psychological health by providing individuals with a sense of control in a seemingly high pressure, uncontrollable world (Peeters & Rutte). Peeters and Rutte concluded that time management allows individuals to pace the exertion of their mental and emotional resources, thus countering work related stressors and promoting wellness. This correlation between

effective time management and wellness is particularly important for promoting self-care among counseling students. Although health professionals consider self-care to be an important wellness element for all individuals, counseling students are in training to promote the mental health of others, possibly a difficult task when the student is currently impaired due to significant stress. Counseling students who are continuously overwhelmed by their academic course load may be less likely to truly engage and grow from the learning process, possibly resulting in negative consequences for their future effectiveness as counselors.

Effects on Individual Wellness

Understanding the factors contributing to ineffective time management strategies is essential in helping counseling students achieve the balanced lifestyle that is often promoted in counseling literature. When counseling students fail to implement effective time management strategies they may find themselves constantly responding to stress rather than proactively managing their stress. Myers and Sweeney (2004) identified stress management as a primary coping skill in the context of individual wellness. When counseling students feel empowered and believe that they can proactively approach tasks, they may be less likely to experience the negative psychological and physical consequences of stress. Achieving balance results in increased physical, mental, and emotional health, as well as improved relationships (Venart, Vassos, & Pitcher-Heft, 2007).

Counselor educators have the skill set and are in a position to address the stress that results from ineffective time management strategies in order to promote wellness among counseling students and ultimately graduate competent emerging professionals. Smith, Robinson, and Young (2007) found counseling students who failed to implement effective self-care strategies, such as time management, to be more likely to enter the workplace with a notable amount of psychological distress. Recent evidence supports the concept of counselor burnout due to the high levels of stress that may begin in training (Lawson, 2007; Lawson & Myers, 2011). Moreover, Lawson and Myers found stressful workloads directly correlated with one's satisfaction level; with increased amounts of work leading to higher levels of stress that ultimately decreases one's overall level of satisfaction. These findings provide clear evidence for the need to help counseling students manage their stress levels. While time management is not the only factor contributing to this cause, effective time management skills are essential in coping with stress (Peeters & Rutte, 2005).

The negative psychological and physical consequences that result from continued ineffective time management are in direct contrast to the importance the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) places on self-care among counseling students (CACREP, 2009). Although researchers have clearly detailed the positive correlation between time management and wellness, it appears counselor educators can increase efforts to stress the importance of time management skills at the organizational level so as to promote increased welfare among counseling students. Counseling programs are a time for students to learn and develop on both personal and professional levels. Part of this learning

process can include helping students develop effective time management skills so they learn to cope with daily stressors in an organized, proactive manner. The investment students and counselor educators make in developing such skills may result in the improved welfare of the counseling students, both during and after their studies. Improved counselor welfare at the training level may foster the necessary foundation of self-care that counselors need to work with clients in an effective manner.

Improving Time Management Strategies

The above-mentioned findings illustrate the complexity of time management and the numerous factors impeding effective time management skills in today's counseling students. Counselor educators can be influential by encouraging their students to consider and use time management strategies in a thoughtful manner, educating students on the benefits such strategies have in promoting student welfare, and offering tactics that help students accomplish their time management goals. With the support of counselor educators, counseling students may find a renewed sense of motivation to consider time management skills an integral part of their academic and professional success. We provide recommendations in an attempt to help overcome traditional time management challenges by identifying both individual and counselor educator strategies that engage students and encourage commitment towards effective time management skills (refer to Table 1).

The high expectations demanded of counseling students and counselor educators fosters an isolating atmosphere in which students come to feel alone and helpless in their struggle to maintain excellence while meeting the numerous deadlines placed upon them. We offer these recommendations to reduce this isolation by bringing time management into the awareness of counseling students and counselor educators. We believe that these recommendations will help counselor educators assist students in meeting their time management goals by encouraging counseling students to develop a more realistic perspective of their time management abilities and connecting students to resources that can help strengthen these skills. By honestly discussing time management struggles at the departmental level, counselor educators can assist students in actively creating an effective time management strategy.

Recommendations for Research

Although the intention of this manuscript is to provide readers with a brief review of the literature associated with time management, personal wellness, and counseling students, we recognize that research practices are required to encourage student and counselor educator buy in and legitimize allocation of resources from counseling departments. We offer several research avenues to explore the utility of time management practices among counseling students. Survey research may be able to identify practices counseling students regard as effective, use most often, and believe will work, but perhaps do not implement due to lack of ability or support. For example, researchers could consider implementing larger, between-groups comparisons of counseling students electing to receive time management and follow-up training and those who do not. Pretest and posttest

measures assessing anxiety, time management habits, overall wellness, or perceptions of self-efficacy may provide valuable information regarding the practical influence of time management practices for counseling students.

In addition, single-case study research designs that follow individual counseling students each semester may provide a readily available means to determine causal relationships (Chambless et al., 1998). Perhaps a mixed methods study would provide new insights. For example, combining quantitative measures of students' time management skills and/or stress levels and qualitative interviews focused on their stress and time management practices related to being a counseling student would shed light on the topic.

Conclusion

Graduate school is a time of significant pressure as students struggle to allocate their limited time to the numerous demands placed upon them. The stress felt by counseling students is further exaggerated as they are subjected to the many conflicting schedules of professors, clients, supervisors, employers, and significant others; with twenty-four hour connectivity threatening constant interruption. Time management can help counseling students feel a renewed sense of empowerment and capability by developing a strategy that allows them to find balance among even the most overwhelming of schedules. The literature reviewed in this manuscript highlights the importance of continued research into how counseling students and counselor educators can work together to develop a culture that encourages the use of effective time management strategies. Focusing on time management at the graduate level is an investment into both the welfare of counseling students and emerging professionals.

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Table 1.

Recommendations for Increasing Effective Time Management among Counseling Students

Individual Level
1. Assume personal responsibility
2. Be realistic
3. Recruit the help of a friend, peer, or partner who can serve as an outlet for accountability
4. Develop perspective that some deadlines will not be met
5. Ask advice from a reliable source knowledgeable in that area
6. Write things down and use a schedule
7. Formally make a plan to meet goals as often as needed
8. Reward yourself with established short and long-term reinforcements to celebrate your achievements. These may include down time, social outings, vacations, healthy treats, and other ways to acknowledge what you have done.

Program Level
1. Discuss time management at incoming student orientation
2. Integrate time management discussions into advising sessions with students
3. Infuse self-care strategies overtly into coursework
4. Provide students a guide-sheet directing them in their time management efforts
5. It is recommended that counselor educators provide narratives from former students to increase realistic expectations of students throughout the program
6. Offer a one-time seminar or workshop with strategies and tips addressing time management strategies for graduate students
