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Richard Joseph Behun, Editor

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# The Journal of the Pennsylvania Counseling Association

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Collaborative Clinical Supervision: A Precursor to Implementing a Feedback Milieu in Counseling <b>David E. Martinson &amp; Ryan Bowers</b>	48
From Idea to Acceptance: Strategies for Successful Publishing in Counseling <b>Micalena I. Sallavanti, Krystle L. Berkoski, &amp; Janet L. Muse-Burke</b>	55
Counselor Education and Contemplative Pedagogy: An Exploration of Mindfulness Practices on the Development of Multicultural Competencies <b>Abby Dougherty</b>	62
The Impact of Counselor Education Training on Student-Parents <b>Kirsten W. Murray, Kimberly J. Desmond, &amp; Shawn P. Parmanand</b>	71
The Amended Child Protective Services Law: New Requirements for Professional Counselors as Mandated Reporters in Pennsylvania <b>Richard Joseph Behun, Eric W. Owens, &amp; Julie Cerrito</b>	79

# Collaborative Clinical Supervision: A Precursor to Implementing a Feedback Milieu in Counseling

David E. Martinson and Ryan Bowers

Continuous client feedback can improve client outcomes regardless of treatment modalities implemented by counselors (Anker, Duncan, & Sparks, 2009). In a Norwegian qualitative study, basic philosophical foundations to implementing continuous client feedback were illustrated as possible indicators to how and why utilizing continuous client feedback works in improving client outcomes in counseling. The results revealed that client collaboration, a necessary element in this milieu, was linked with a prestige-free, collaborative stance of the supervisor of the counselor (Martinson, 2012). Ulvestad and Kärki (2012) describe three separate supervision feedback instruments that can be used to enhance collaboration between a supervisee and a supervisor in clinical supervision. This feedback process provides a supervisory parallel for the collaborative approach needed to effectively utilize continuous client feedback in counseling.

*Keywords:* Collaborative clinical supervision, feedback assessed supervision

Studies have shown that using continuous client feedback can improve client outcomes in psychotherapy (Anker, Duncan, & Sparks, 2009; Brown & Jones, 2005; Miller, Duncan, Brown, Sorrell, & Chalk, 2006; Reese, Norsworthy, & Rowlands, 2009; Reese, Toland, Slone, & Norsworthy, 2010; Whipple et al., 2003). Anker and colleagues (2009) revealed in their sizeable, landmark study of couples in the Scandinavian country of Norway that continuous client feedback used in the counseling session produced better outcomes, regardless of therapy techniques or methods used by the therapist. Reese, et al. (2009) determined in their study that continuous client feedback used by counselors in supervision can increase counselor effectiveness, as well as have a positive effect on counselor self-assessment of skills. Self-monitoring by using outcome management tools, such as continuous client feedback, may provide counselors in training with additional resources to improve their skills and effectiveness as counselors (Duncan, 2010; Lambert, Hansen, & Finch, 2001). Continuous client feedback can be described as a manner in which counselors collect information directly from clients in order to make adjustments to therapy to improve the overall effectiveness of therapy (Anker et al., 2009).

In a qualitative dissertation study conducted in a treatment center in Norway, basic philosophical

foundations to implementing continuous client feedback were illustrated as possible indicators to how and why utilizing continuous client feedback works in improving client outcomes in counseling (Martinson, 2012). These elements included two primary themes: client collaboration and positional stance of the therapist. This study also revealed that the requirement to use continuous client feedback tools in therapy did not, in and of itself, produce a true successful collaborative feedback environment. Supervisors also needed to apply this unique parallel process to supervision by adopting a prestige free, collaborative attitude toward their trainees. Supervisors had to acknowledge trainees, show trust in their work and learning, negotiate with them in supervision, and demonstrate flexibility. This philosophy of collaboration has consequently led to the development of a model of supervision that employs assessment of transcultural feedback using a set of supervision feedback instruments originally created by Ulvestad which has been described in the Norwegian published work, *Flerstemt Veiledning* (Ulvestad & Kärki, 2012).

As a way to illustrate this parallel process, a qualitative, exploratory pilot study, which has yet to be completed and published, is being conducted at a university clinical mental health counseling program located in southeastern Pennsylvania. This project seeks

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to further understand how these supervision feedback instruments, implemented in clinical supervision during an internship placement, could model for counseling students the collaborative approach needed to effectively utilize continuous client feedback in counseling. The researchers, after seeking permission from the Norwegian instrument developer, carefully translated the Norwegian supervision feedback tools (Ulvestad & Kärki, 2012) into English, taking care to consider the nuances of meaning and applicability to the English speaker. These three clinical supervision feedback instruments: Goals for Supervision, Supervision Exchange Outcome, and Evaluation of Supervision Session have subsequently been implemented for the first time in the United States in selected practicum and internship sites within a clinical mental health counseling program in Pennsylvania. Counseling students and site supervisors are being surveyed in their use of these instruments in an attempt to learn how feedback in supervision can potentially mirror the benefits of feedback in counseling with the hope of developing useful supervision tools promoting collaborative supervision practices.

## Feedback in Counseling

Feedback is a communication phenomenon that occurs in the therapeutic setting regardless of the therapy methods that are utilized by counseling professionals. The word feedback, however, might have ambiguous meanings to many clinicians in the field. Some clinicians may refer to the information provided by therapists to clients in counseling sessions. Conversely, this term could also refer to the reports that clients share with their counselors in these same sessions. Recently, however, client generated feedback has served a more formal role in monitoring outcome of psychotherapy and there has been a call for therapeutic interventions to be evaluated within each therapeutic context to determine if a given therapeutic approach is truly effective from the client's perspective (Ackerman et al., 2001; Duncan, 2010; Lambert et al., 2003).

### Utilizing Continuous Client Feedback

Discussion continues to emerge regarding the specific utilization of continuous client feedback to monitor effectiveness of therapy (Duncan, 2010; Lambert, 2010). Various continuous client feedback tools have been developed in the last decade (Bowens & Cooper, 2012; Frisch, Cornell, Villanueva, & Retzlaff, 1992; Lambert, Gregorsen, & Burlingame, 2004; Miller & Duncan, 2004) and utilized by counselors in order to determine the effectiveness of counseling and evaluate outcomes. Some research has

focused on clients rating their own individual symptoms of distress, interpersonal relations, and social performance (Lambert et al., 1996; Lambert & Hill, 1994; Maruish, 2004). Some instruments have been designed as ultra-brief instruments for weekly use (Miller, Duncan, Brown, Sparks, & Claud, 2003).

Feedback-based outcome management practice has its origins in meta-analytic research that questions the effectiveness of one therapy model over another (Lambert et al., 2003; Wampold, 2001). The counseling profession has also moved in the direction of using research to validate counseling best practices (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014) leading to implementation of evidence-based practices (Norcross, Levant, & Beutler, 2005). Additionally, the *2014 ACA Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014) states that counselors not only have the "responsibility to the public to engage in counseling practices that are based on rigorous research methodologies," but are to "continually monitor their effectiveness as professionals and take steps to improve" what they do in therapy (p. 8).

Beginning in 1996, the profession began advocating for systemic evaluation of client response to treatment during the course of therapy in order to evaluate the effectiveness of therapy (Howard, Moras, Brill, Martinovich, & Lutz, 1996). In response to this call to the profession, some have recommended the use of continuous client feedback during the course of treatment as a way for counselors to systematically evaluate and improve the effectiveness of therapy (Anker et al., 2009; Brown & Jones, 2005; Hawkins et al., 2004; Lambert et al., 2003; Miller et al., 2006; Whipple et al., 2003). Nonetheless, many counselors are slow to implement research into everyday practice, (Shallcross, 2012) regardless of the cited need for evaluation of prescribed therapeutic interventions to determine if a given approach is truly effective (Ackerman et al., 2001; Duncan, 2010; Lambert et al., 2003). Multiple reasons might exist as to why counselors do not implement continuous client feedback into practice, leading researchers to explore these possibilities more in-depth. One theory suggests that it may relate to the attitudes and positional stance of a clinical supervisor in the training of a novice clinician (Martinson, 2012).

### Resistance to Using Feedback in Counseling and Supervision

In exploring resistance of counselors to using continuous client feedback in therapy to adjust therapeutic interventions, one might need to explore the parallel manner in which supervisors might be resistant to receiving feedback from supervisees in training counselors (Ulvestad & Kärki, 2012). Counseling and

supervision are therapeutic practices that may commit to theoretical models rather than rely on client or supervisee feedback. Resistance to using supervisee feedback in clinical supervision may also stem from the nature of the clinical supervision process.

Bernard and Goodyear (2008) define supervision as:

An intervention that is provided by a senior member of a profession to a junior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the junior member(s), monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the clients she, he, or they interview, and serving as a gatekeeper of those who are to enter the particular profession. (p. 8)

In Latin, the term “supervisor” means to “look over,” and a supervisor is further described in the literature as a “foreman,” or someone leading and in charge of the direction of counseling (Powell & Brodsky, 2004). The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES, 1990) makes a point of describing supervision as an activity that includes “assisting the counselor in adjusting steps in the progression toward a goal based on ongoing assessment and evaluation” (p. 31) and is, according to the *2014 ACA Code of Ethics*, concentrated on the supervisor’s gate-keeping function and evaluation of supervisee as outlined in sections F.6.a. and F.6.b. This then could clash with the prestige-free attitude determined to be a necessary element of creating a feedback environment (Martinson, 2012).

### Feedback and Commitment to Theory

Theoretical models have become helpful frameworks to assist clinicians in conceptualizing the etiology of client problems and potential effective treatment strategies. Many counselor education programs follow the standards set out by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). CACREP (2009), as well as other accreditation entities, advocate for the erudition of a variety of models and theories in counseling as part of the counselor training process.

Various supervision modalities cited in counseling supervision textbooks also focus on developing competence and acquiring a set of skills in counselors, which can be enhanced through a clinical supervision context (Bernard & Goodyear, 2008). Interventions and theoretical approaches are researched, become standardized and manualized, and are put into practice. As a result, many clinicians, with the encouragement of clinical supervisors, may gravitate toward therapeutic models as solutions to client problems and resort to

assuming that lack of good therapy results are due to factors such as a lack of counselor competence, client resistance to therapeutic interventions, or even due to improperly learned techniques. Still, many clinicians intuitively know that clients hold the keys to change and theoretical bases are not enough (Shallcross, 2012). In the same way, clinical supervisors know their clinical supervision models and interventions are only as good as they are able to be utilized and adopted by the supervisee within the counseling context (Ulvestad & Kärki, 2012). Feedback from supervisees then could become a necessary and vital element for understanding the progress and development of a novice clinician, expanding on ways to study supervision outcomes as part of a process based approach as described by Falender and Shafranske (2004).

### Feedback and Fear of Consequences

Client feedback to counselors and supervisee feedback to supervisors may be viewed by some counselors and supervisors as producing additional scrutiny of their work. Counselors may be resistant to being evaluated by clients (Martinson, 2012). If a client is evaluating the therapy session, alliance with the counselor, and outcomes of therapy, then professional responsibility is heightened. If, in supervision, responsibility is given to the supervisees to evaluate progress and the supervision alliance, supervisors might need to learn to work through the vulnerability of being evaluated by the supervisee and the fear of what this feedback might reveal about their practice as supervisors. In the clinical supervision setting, having the supervisee give feedback to a supervisor about progress, alliance, and focus on goals may, to some expert clinicians and clinical supervisors, seem counterintuitive and even detrimental to the natural hierarchical structure of the counseling supervision process (Ulvestad & Kärki, 2012).

### Benefits of Using Feedback in Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision has been used in the field of counseling as a way to monitor counselors' work with clients (ACA, 2014; Bernard & Goodyear, 2008) and safeguard client welfare (Dennin & Ellis, 2003). The role of supervision for counselors and for those new to the field of counseling has also been clearly outlined, according to guiding ethical entities (ACA, 2014). As counselors develop skills to work with clients, supervisors are to act as guides to assure that counselors are meeting client needs, as well as furthering skill development (Bernard & Goodyear, 2008; Powell & Brodsky, 2004; Reese et al., 2009). Supervision is a

daunting task that carries with it many responsibilities, including monitoring the services provided by the supervisees and supervisee performance and professional development (ACA, 2014). Introducing feedback in clinical supervision during internship might assist with these tasks.

### **Allows Focus on Supervisee Theory of Change**

Counselor development is a common focus of change in supervision (Falender & Shafransky, 2004; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Supervisees may participate in clinical supervision in order to experience a change in their awareness, perceptions, skills, knowledge, confidence, or numerous other factors. Although supervision models may aim at facilitating change in the supervisee, it is hard to measure or attribute change to specific supervision interventions. Supervision feedback tools could serve as a way to monitor supervisee progress.

### **Brief Tools Available for Monitoring Supervision Outcomes**

Ulvestad and Kärki (2012) describe three separate supervision feedback instruments developed in Norway for use in clinical supervision in an effort to promote and enhance collaboration between a supervisee and a supervisor. These supervision feedback measures were translated from Norwegian to English for use in the United States. The instruments are being introduced to clinical mental health counseling graduate program internship settings to determine feasibility and applicability transculturally in varied supervision environments. Although, the instruments have not yet been fully studied, validated, or tested for reliability, exploratory implementation of these scales in a clinical mental health counseling program internship indicate the potential usefulness of these instruments to enhance the clinical supervision experience for supervisees. The clinical supervision feedback instruments introduced as potentially viable instruments are as follows:

**Goals for Supervision (GFS).** This instrument is to be used at the initiation of clinical supervision to designate goals for the weekly supervision sessions in the four specific areas: Knowledge, Reflection, Skills, and Coping. It can be completed by either the supervisee alone or by both supervisee and supervisor.

**Supervision Exchange Outcome (SEO).** This instrument is completed by the supervisee and brought to the field site supervisor in the supervision session (every three to four weeks) to enhance the collaboration

of the supervisee and supervisor in regard to meeting the goals for supervision.

**Evaluation of Supervision Session (ESS).** This instrument is completed by the supervisee to measure the alliance between the supervisee and the supervisor at the end of each supervision session.

### **Works to Empower the Supervisee Voice in Supervision**

Pursuing and implementing supervisee feedback in a counseling supervision session can have a value for the novice counselor and clinical supervisor alike and could suggest that it might include an important possible side effect of empowering supervisees to implement a feedback environment with their clients (Martinson, 2012). This might give counselors in training additional motivation to be willing to collect client feedback and adjust therapy to meet their clients' needs.

Although this feedback practice could enhance supervision outcomes and therapeutic outcomes, one obstacle might present itself. According to Martinson (2012), counselors and supervisors who implemented a feedback milieu needed to possess a willingness to relinquish the power they automatically receive at the onset of therapy or supervision. Therapists and supervisors would also need to value elevating the voice of the other (client or supervisee) over the commitment to theory or therapeutic model in order to engage in feedback practices (Huggins, Huggins, & Valla, 2007).

## **Foundational Elements to Using Supervision Feedback**

Some research indicates that it may be necessary to ascribe to some basic philosophical stances with reference to the counseling relationship in order to implement continuous client feedback (Huggins et al., 2007; Martinson, 2012; Ulvestad & Kärki, 2012). Themes discovered in the clinical supervision context suggest common elements parallel to the client counselor feedback study (Martinson, 2012).

### **Themes in Collaborative Feedback**

Key elements discovered in a study of therapists utilizing continuous client feedback in practice include two primary themes, client collaboration and positional stance of the therapist. Five sub-themes were described in the study: true acknowledgment of the client; prestige-free attitude toward the client; trusting the client; flexibility in treatment; and willingness to

negotiate therapy with the client (Martinson, 2012). When a counselor chooses to listen, collect, and use client feedback in counseling, the client may benefit from the therapist's willingness to adopt these philosophical standpoints. They appear to give the client a stronger voice in therapy, which can be empowering.

In supervision, the benefits of supervision feedback could replicate those in the client feedback study. Allowing a supervisee to provide continuous feedback to a clinical supervisor about the progress, alliance, and future needs of the novice clinician seem to provide a stronger voice to the supervisee in the supervision session. The clinical counseling supervision feedback instruments could provide tools that might better define the supervision goals. The simple tools were designed for regular use within multiple settings (group, individual, in- or outside of the supervision room). Their use further enhances communication between the supervisee and supervisor by encouraging openness and flexibility. This sets the stage for collaborative clinical supervision at a basic level of communication.

### Feedback and Power

Because a feedback milieu in supervision depends on the supervisor's capacity to relinquish some authority to engage in a collaborative process with the supervisee (Ulvestad & Kärki, 2012), it is important to examine the power dynamics in the supervisory relationship. Empowerment of the supervisee shifts the balance of power in the relationship. Muse-Burke, Ladany, & Deck (2001) noted that some supervisors may view a shift as a threat to their professional training or practice. Others see that the power held by the supervisor does not exist independently of the interactions within the relationship. Collecting feedback in the session might, to some supervisors, suggest the need to listen closely to the supervisee and adapt the supervision process to respond to supervisee feedback unnecessarily. Continuous supervisee feedback in supervision may appear to abdicate control to the supervisee and threaten the expert-driven mindset that can accompany a supervisory role. Yet supervisors are called to be "sensitive to the evaluative nature of supervision and effectively responds to the counselor's anxiety relative to performance evaluation" (ACES, 1990, p. 30).

There are many ways the power differential could manifest itself in the supervision relationship. Novice counselors, who present themselves to supervision for training, often presume that the supervisors have the answers they are lacking in order to improve their counseling skills. Licensed and certified professionals who are in the role of clinical supervisors are generally more skilled and adept in recognizing and

understanding client problems, having been trained in a variety of therapeutic techniques which many novice counselors are struggling to understand and put to practice. Supervisees can be seen as entering into the supervision relationship at a power disadvantage. This might be felt in the language used in supervision and the approaches taught and deemed appropriate by the supervisor.

To further broaden the power gap, novice counselors are, at times, given treatment manuals which have been validated and provide evidence-based solutions to specific problems. Supervisors hold a position of influence in the supervision relationship, serving as gatekeepers to the profession, and function as evaluators of counselor progress. In addition, supervisors are trained therapists that are highly skilled at using a professional language that may not be easily understood by the novice counselor.

Supervisees are entering supervision to receive guidance with client dilemmas and lack experience in handling difficult cases. This sets the foundation for an unequal relationship between the supervisor and the novice counselor. Embracing continuous supervision feedback in supervision settings might shift the aforementioned balance by incorporating true acknowledgment of the supervisee, integrating a prestige-free attitude toward the supervisee, trusting the supervisee to make decisions about treatment, improving flexibility in supervision, and increasing the willingness to negotiate supervision with the supervisee. For these elements to exist, and true collaboration to occur, a supervisor would need to be non-judgmental, confident, collaborative, and accepting of feedback from the supervisee in a manner in which the supervisor finds the feedback useful. If this supervisory feedback environment is in place, it may encourage counselors to seek replication in a client feedback milieu.

### Conclusions

The study of continuous supervision feedback in clinical counseling supervision underscores that the practice depends on the existence of certain foundational elements in the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Soliciting regular feedback from supervisees in each supervision session to inform the supervision process might prove too radical for some supervisors. It may be viewed as a challenge to the supervisors' commitment to theory, produce fear of results, and require additional resources and time to implement (Ulvestad & Kärki, 2012). A supervisee feedback process empowers supervisees and balances the power differential in the supervision setting. For some supervisors, this oversteps traditional professional

boundaries. On the other hand, the identified benefits of allowing the focus of the supervision session to be informed by supervisee feedback on ultra-brief supervision scales, as suggested, could outweigh the discomfort that might be experienced by such a shift. Implementation of feedback processes propels the supervisor to further investigate the supervisee's role in the supervision session, encourages collaborative dialogue, inevitably pushing the supervisee's voice to the forefront of clinical supervision. It is proposed that utilizing this form of feedback assessed collaborative supervision will further encourage a supervisee to more fully embrace a feedback milieu that will seek to put the client's voice ultimately at the forefront of each counseling session.

The facilitation of the supervisee and client voices in supervision and counseling processes is perhaps best summarized by a simple wall plaque hanging at a collaborative feedback therapy center in Norway. The plaque includes an excerpt of a quote by the Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard (1895/1998), and it reads (translated from Danish): "If one is truly to succeed in leading a person to a specific place, one must first and foremost take care to find him where he is and begin there" (p. 45). Kierkegaard (1895/1998) writes that all genuine desire to help another begins with humility toward the one you seek to help, not to reign, but to serve. Kierkegaard (1895/1998), further concludes that without doing so, one cannot help another.

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# From Idea to Acceptance: Strategies for Successful Publishing in Counseling

Micalena I. Sallavanti, Krystle L. Berkoski, and Janet L. Muse-Burke

The execution and public dissemination of research is critical to the field of counseling (Kottler & Shepard, 2015). As such, this article reviews literature on writing and publishing manuscripts in order to provide counselors, counselor educators, and counselors-in-training with guidance for successfully publishing in counseling journals. To that end, this article describes guidelines for developing manuscripts commonly found in the counseling literature. Further, the article examines ethical principles (ACA, 2014) crucial for research and publication.

*Keywords:* Publication guidelines, manuscript writing, counseling journals

Writing a manuscript can be an overwhelming and time-consuming task. Authors assume a challenge when endeavoring to produce a well-articulated scholarly article. This challenge is often amplified by low acceptance rates of journals. If authors wish to become published in academic outlets of the American Counseling Association (ACA), including the Journal of the Pennsylvania Counseling Association (JPCA), it is important to create quality papers that contribute novel ideas to the mental health field. This article summarizes guidance derived from a review of literature addressing writing and publication.

Editors and reviewers dissect every aspect of a manuscript; thus, authors must ensure that submitted manuscripts are refined to the last detail. In fact, certain sections of a manuscript might require 25 to 30 revisions (Overholser, 2011). While this might seem tedious, careful editing of a manuscript will assist in gaining favorable ratings from reviewers and journal editors. For further guidance on how to obtain favorable ratings, authors might rely on a variety of academic and personal resources including published articles (e.g., Kalpakjian & Meade, 2008; Overholser, 2011), textbooks and published resources (e.g., American Psychological Association; APA, 2009), and mentors and colleagues (Milsom, 2010).

## General Guidelines

Journals are often selective in choosing articles to

publish. There is little space for manuscripts that ignore details, present disorganized thoughts, or relay inconsequential information. As a result, authors must ensure that manuscripts are organized and clearly written. Counseling journals seek manuscripts that present valid, well-articulated concepts about significant issues in the mental health field (Drotar, 2009; Overholser, 2011).

## Manuscript Foundations

Manuscript writing begins with the formation of an idea that addresses an important topic in the field that is also of interest to the author (Ling Pan, 2008). This idea should be an original concept based in theory and/or research; it is ideal to develop a topic that balances scholarliness and creativity (Milsom, 2010). For example, it is expected that the research offered will be of scholarly significance, but it can be framed within new perspectives (Milsom, 2010). Similarly, when looking to publish, it is necessary to consider the timeliness and relevance of the topic. The subject matter should address the current needs and trends of professional counseling (Milsom, 2010; Ling Pan, 2008). Additionally, the manuscript should present a strong rationale that clearly articulates the significance of the concept (Overholser, 2011). Once an idea has been developed, the author should create a plan for organizing, writing, and submitting the manuscript (Kalpakjian & Meade, 2008).

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In the early stages of manuscript development, it is important to select the journal to which the article will be submitted. Authors should examine journals that publish articles with a similar focus as their manuscript. Cabell's International (<http://www.cabells.com>) is an example of a website that provides a complete list of journals that are relevant to a topic area. The acceptance rate, submission requirements, and reviewing process of each journal should be considered when selecting the journal for submission; the relative importance of each of these factors will depend on the needs of the authors. After selecting the journal to which the manuscript will be submitted, authors should read articles from that journal. This can assist in determining the journal's audience, structure, and writing style (Kalpakjian & Meade, 2008).

It is also important to decide who will contribute to the submission. If several authors are collaborating on the same manuscript, the order of authorship should be discussed early in the process. Ideally, this order is determined by the quantity and quality of the contributions; thus, the lead author should be the one who is most involved in the project (ACA, 2014; Kalpakjian & Meade, 2008). An article that is developed largely from the work of a student should be credited to the student as lead author (ACA, 2014). The lead author is responsible for communicating with the journal editor and co-authors, organizing the manuscript development process, and creating a timeline for submission (Kalpakjian & Meade, 2008).

## Manuscript Writing

After determining authorship, it is time to begin the writing process. This process can be difficult, tedious, and overwhelming. Authors may find it helpful to first generate an outline. This can provide structure and accelerate writing (Kalpakjian & Meade, 2008). In addition, there are several guidelines that assist authors to enhance writing quality, including maintaining smoothness and continuity of expression, developing clear and concise paragraphs, and noticing fine details (APA, 2009).

Smooth and continuous writing ensures that the main ideas of the manuscript are conveyed in a clear and logical manner. There are several ways to create consistent and fluid writing. First, fluidity can be achieved through employing transitional words, such as "although," "in addition," and "furthermore." This can help authors efficiently shift from one topic to another. Continuity can be attained through the reliable use of verb tenses. Authors should employ the past tense when discussing methods, results, and previous research; the present tense should be used when presenting implication of the results and drawing conclusions. Further, continuity and smoothness can be maintained

by using pronouns to avoid word repetition. When used in moderation, pronouns can prevent the writing of monotonous prose; however, authors should avoid the overuse of pronouns as they can create ambiguity in the manuscript (APA, 2009).

In addition to fluidity, scientific writing should be clear and concise. Authors should utilize brief, direct sentences and remove all unnecessary wording. Each statement should add an important piece of information to the manuscript. Authors should not describe gratuitous ideas or explain evident concepts. Abbreviations should be used sparingly as they can cause sentences to become meaningless. Generally, only widely accepted abbreviations and acronyms should be employed. This will assist in developing straightforward prose that readers can easily understand (APA, 2009; Overholser, 2011).

Attention to detail is another important aspect of manuscript writing (Milsom, 2010). When authors submit a manuscript with obvious formatting, spelling, and grammar issues, reviewers might question the authors' meticulousness when performing the research. Reviewers and editors might assume that these authors were as careless in their research as they were in their manuscript. As a result, authors should proofread the paper several times. Additionally, authors should enlist the assistance of peers and colleagues to review the manuscript before submission. This will ensure that formatting, spelling, and grammar problems are resolved (Kalpakjian & Meade, 2008; Overholser, 2011).

## Developing Sections of a Manuscript

Titles are the first aspect of a manuscript noticed by readers; they assist individuals in identifying articles of interest. As a result, titles should be concise, informative, and functional. Authors should avoid developing witty titles that contain futile phrases (Pyrzczak & Bruce, 2007). According to the APA (2009), titles should consist of no more than 12 words. Within these few words, authors must convey the main idea of the manuscript. This is best accomplished by including the names of the constructs being studied (Pyrzczak & Bruce, 2007).

For a more in depth description of the article, readers examine the abstract. Abstracts are brief, comprehensive summaries (Overholser, 2011), consisting of about 150 words (APA, 2009). Due to this constraint, authors must use words wisely and ensure that the abstract is dense with information. Authors may find it helpful to write the abstract after the manuscript is complete. This allows time to review the paper and develop an inclusive synopsis (Pyrzczak & Bruce, 2007).

Sequentially, the next element of a journal article is

a literature review. In this section, authors must develop a strong rationale based in past research and theory (APA, 2009). Authors should assume that readers are apathetic to the importance of the manuscript; thus, it is the authors' duty to convince readers that the manuscript is a significant contribution to the mental health field (Drotar, 2009). In order to persuade readers, authors must write a focused and comprehensive literature review. The authors should display a strong understanding of the concepts being examined. They should employ literature written in the past five years and avoid using sources that have failed to undergo peer review, such as unpublished manuscripts and conference presentations (Overholser, 2011). Authors should integrate several sources and highlight gaps in literature. Through highlighting these gaps, authors can present a rationale for how their manuscript will add to previous research (Kalpakjian & Meade, 2008; Pyrczak & Bruce, 2007). By the conclusion of the literature review, readers should gather a basic knowledge of the concepts being studied and recognize the novel contributions of the manuscript to the mental health field.

References are the last element of a manuscript. Most mental health and counseling journals, including *JPCA*, follow the guidelines developed by the APA (2009). References should be inclusive of all literature needed to support the authors' claims. Only references cited in the paper should be incorporated into the reference list. Before submitting a manuscript, authors should crosscheck to make certain that all citations are included in the references and all references are cited in the text. Notably, digital object identifiers (DOIs) are a recently added component of references; they were developed to provide an electronic means of identifying and managing information, including published manuscripts (APA, 2009). Resources such as CrossRef.org can assist authors in ascertaining DOIs that are not easily identified on articles. Furthermore, authors must verify the accuracy of the information included in the references, including authors' names and publication dates (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2007). While this can be tedious task, it is important because it displays to editors and reviewers a meticulous attention to detail (Overholser, 2011).

## Types of Articles

Scholarly articles can vary significantly depending on the profession, the topic, and the journal. In professional counseling, a wide range of scholarly works are published in refereed journals. Articles accepted for review and publication in counseling journals typically include conceptual articles (Callahan, 2010), practice articles (Falco & McCarthy, 2013), and

qualitative and quantitative empirical articles (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2007).

## Conceptual Articles

There are various kinds of conceptual articles. Examples include (a) theoretical articles, (b) integrated literature reviews, (c) reaction pieces, and (d) professional issues manuscripts (Callahan, 2010). While conceptual rather than empirical in nature, these articles often make significant and meaningful contributions to professional counseling.

Theoretical conceptual articles are often the means by which new theories are generated, old theories are renewed, or multiple existing theories are integrated for the first time (Callahan, 2010). Theoretical articles offer an in-depth consideration of the theory presented. The theory's history and development is fully vetted in the article; if the theory or its application is new, it is compared to others in order to demonstrate both strengths and weaknesses. Unlike empirical articles, data is typically omitted, unless it is relevant to the conceptualization or the assessment of the theory (Callahan, 2010).

Integrated literature reviews are conceptual articles that methodically study previously published literature such that the given study can be replicated (Callahan, 2010). Integrated literature reviews seek to assess the integrity and results of previous literature in order to help clarify a defined problem (Callahan, 2010). As such, authors of integrated literature reviews have the task of explaining the problem and its significance to the field of counseling in addition to accurately summarizing and assessing any previous research that is related to the problem. Oftentimes, in the discussion section, integrated literature reviews suggest paths for future research or provide specific steps for how to resolve the identified problem.

Other forms of conceptual articles include reaction articles and articles that explore professional issues (Watts, 2011). Reaction articles give authors the opportunity to respond to previously published works from their point of view, often supported by literature related to the topic. Articles that explore and clarify professional issues might cover a wide range of topics related to counseling, such as developing a professional identity, ethics, conducting supervision, changing public policy, and advancing multicultural competence.

While conceptual articles include various subjects, they can be more difficult to write than empirical articles (Watts, 2011). A rigorous conceptual article requires considerable knowledge of the concept as well as extensive planning and preparation. Idea generation is the first challenge that authors must overcome when writing a conceptual article. Ideas can be developed from reading other conceptual articles, especially in the

journal to which submission is planned (Watts, 2011). In order to develop ideas, Salomone (1993) recommended that authors (a) become highly knowledgeable of the literature related to the topic, (b) converse with colleagues about the topic to form and clarify ideas, and (c) write about the topic to further personal understanding.

After generating an idea, authors must decide how to format conceptual articles. In contrast to empirical articles, conceptual articles tend to lack standardized formatting (Watts, 2011). Watts (2011) offered the following model for organizing a conceptual article. First, begin with an introduction, in which the purpose of the article is stated. The introduction informs readers of the article's content and captures their attention (Watts, 2011). Follow the introduction with a strong review of the related literature. The literature review creates a context for the earlier stated purpose. In this section, it is important to present multiple viewpoints that are supported in the literature; providing only literature that affirms the author's position might lead to damaged credibility (Watts, 2011). Next, present the new concept, theory, or position with a detailed description (Watts, 2011). Lastly, include a discussion and implications section. This section helps readers better understand what was previously presented by offering interpretations and clarification. Implications specific to the field of counseling are discussed in the discussion as well (Watts, 2011). Following a model such as this will create flow, maintain organization, and allow for easier reading of your conceptual article.

### Practice Articles

Practice articles are scholarly manuscripts that focus on counseling interventions. Areas addressed in practice articles include counseling interventions and techniques, professional experiences with counseling clients, program applications, and training and supervision approaches (Falco & McCarthy, 2013). While the content of a practice article may appear to overlap with conceptual articles, practice articles are distinct in that they provide a level of detail that allows the intervention or approach to be replicated by readers.

Practice articles, like conceptual articles, frequently lack standard formatting; the APA (2009) recommends, "continuity in presentation of ideas" (p. 65). To enhance the flow of counseling practice articles, authors should start with an introduction that clearly states the purpose of the article. The introduction in a practice article includes a review of pertinent literature with the intention of providing context for the approach or technique. The introductory literature review emphasizes the importance of and the need for the specific practice (Falco & McCarthy, 2013; Guiffreda, Schwitzer, & Choate, 2006). The introduction also

incorporates details as to common uses of the intervention, the population for which the intervention is appropriate, and research in support of the intervention. The next section provides a review of methods. The method section includes detailed descriptions of the development of the intervention, the intervention itself, and specific goals of the intervention (Falco & McCarthy, 2013). Elements that will bolster a practice article's method section include operational definitions of constructs, identification of materials required for implementation, and a description of the role of the counseling professional (Falco & McCarthy, 2013). Case examples should also be included as the author sees fit to illustrate the intervention for readers (Falco & McCarthy, 2013; Guiffreda et al., 2006).

Following the method section, a practice article might present results. The results section reviews the expected outcomes of the intervention. The information in this section might inform future empirical investigations of the intervention. As such, it is necessary to describe appropriate outcome measures and pilot data, if available. As with most scholarly works, practice articles end with a discussion section. Here, it is essential to connect the originally stated purpose with the goals and outcomes of the intervention (Falco & McCarthy, 2013). Additionally, the counseling intervention is discussed in relation to matters of diversity and multicultural competence in professional counseling (Falco & McCarthy, 2013). The results section acknowledges limitations and offers suggestions for future research. Case examples should also be included as the author sees fit to illustrate the intervention for readers (Falco & McCarthy, 2013; Guiffreda et al., 2006). While counseling practice articles might vary slightly from this model, adhering to an organized format will enhance the article and increase the likelihood of publication.

### Qualitative Articles

Qualitative articles present empirical research that is conducted through immersion (Hunt, 2011). Qualitative research is conducted when there is limited information available regarding a topic or when there is a desire to explore areas of existing research in greater detail (Hunt, 2011; Rubel & Villalba, 2009). Naturalistic observations and exploratory research that omits manipulation and pre-determined hypotheses constitute qualitative research. Qualitative research is conducted in order to answer research questions, enhance understanding of various phenomena, and learn about client's experiences. While qualitative research is common in the social sciences, there are numerous forms of qualitative methodologies (Hunt, 2011). As such, it can be confusing to determine how to format and develop a well-reasoned, rational qualitative

article specific to professional counseling (Rubel & Villalba, 2009).

To improve organization for readers, authors should begin by crafting a thorough literature review (Hunt, 2011). The literature review stresses the relevancy of the phenomenon in question to professional counseling. In this section, it is necessary to justify the use of the qualitative methodology selected (Hunt, 2011; Rubel & Villalba, 2009). This is accomplished by identifying the gaps in the literature and the guiding research questions that stem from these gaps (Hunt, 2011). It is important for authors to state research questions clearly so that readers understand the purpose of the article (Rubel & Villalba, 2009). Next, a method section includes an exhaustive overview of the development of the study (Hunt, 2011). The methods section should incorporate details of the roles and biases of the involved researchers, selection and demographics of participants, description of participant activity, and explanation of data analyses. Following the method section, a findings section reports identified patterns in participant responses; tables or figures might accompany the findings section. The findings also discuss the researchers' roles and possible influences on the investigation outcomes. In this section, it is important to clearly support all claims with concrete examples (Frieze, 2008). Finally, a discussion section summarizes findings and connects them to the previous literature (Frieze, 2008; Hunt, 2011). As with other manuscripts, this section includes strengths and weaknesses as well as implications for counseling professionals. Qualitative research may have less standardization in terms of conceptualization and formatting, but the rigor of qualitative research, when offered in an organized manner, can offer valuable scholarly contributions.

## Quantitative Articles

Quantitative research articles recount systematic empirical investigations, guided by a priori hypotheses and analyzed with statistical procedures. When developing quantitative research, Trusty (2011) notes that the most important decisions are made prior to data collection. Two recommendations for enhancing the investigation and subsequent manuscript are (a) becoming versed in the relevant literature and (b) conducting a pilot study.

Authors have the most direction when writing quantitative articles in comparison to other types of manuscripts. Guidelines provided by APA (2009) are specific, calling for rigor and detailing expectations for each section of an empirical article. The first section required is the introduction or literature review. This section identifies the problem the research plans to address and overviews the related literature base.

Before beginning the next section, the hypotheses are presented (Granello, 2007). The method section follows the literature review, and it describes the research design fully, including participation recruitment, participant demographics, interventions, and instrumentation (Granello, 2007). Next, the results section details the outcomes of the investigation (Granello, 2007). Specifically, this section explains the statistical analyses utilized. It offers results in the context of the previously stated hypotheses. The results are inclusive of all analyses employed, regardless of the support they offer for the hypotheses (Granello, 2007). A discussion section concludes a quantitative article. This section presents a concise overview of the study, key findings and connects findings to the earlier literature review. As is typical in a discussion, this section offers strengths and limitations. Finally, the discussion proposes implications for professional counseling and suggestions for future research.

## Publication Ethics

In order to maintain the integrity of scholarly publishing, the ACA (2014) includes a section on Research and Publication in the code of ethics. This section of the code consists of five main principles: (a) research responsibilities, (b) rights of research participants, (c) managing and maintaining boundaries, (d) reporting results, and (e) publications and presentations. Each of these principles contains several guidelines that serve to instruct authors about how to be honest and just researchers.

The first ethical principle describes the researcher's responsibilities, including following ethical guidelines, maintaining confidentiality, adhering to standard practices, and avoiding harm to participants (ACA, 2014). According to the second principle, which emphasizes participants' rights, researchers are mandated to ascertain informed consent from participants, explain the purpose of the research following participation, and maintain records according to established procedures (ACA, 2014). The third principle addresses maintaining appropriate relationships with participants and avoiding sexual relationships or sexual harassment of participants (ACA, 2014). In reporting results, which is the fourth principle, authors have a responsibility to accurately report their findings. Moreover, unfavorable findings and errors in reporting should be made public (ACA, 2014). In the fifth principle, publication and presentation, authors are tasked with maintaining the confidentiality of participants. Further, this principle denounces plagiarism, asserts acknowledgement of previous work and the contributions of other authors, and forbids duplicate submissions (ACA, 2014).

While these guidelines are basic, they are a vital aspect of scholarly writing. Authors must be aware of these ethical principles and follow them closely. Many aspects related to publication ethics are unmonitored; thus, journal editors and reviewers rely on the honesty of authors to maintain the integrity of manuscript development and publication.

## Conclusion

While manuscript writing is a demanding endeavor, sharing the latest research and knowledge with practicing counselors is critical to the advancement of the field (Kottler & Shepard, 2015). Therefore, this article aimed to synthesize the current literature on publishing in counseling, assisting authors in creating quality, original manuscripts. Exceptional papers address significant issues in a clear and concise manner. They include descriptive titles and abstracts, convincing literature reviews, and detailed references. While the formatting of a manuscript varies based on its type (i.e., conceptual, practice, qualitative, or quantitative), all manuscripts must be direct, logical, and fluid. Further, in their development of manuscripts, authors must follow the guiding principles of the ACA Code of Ethics (2014), observing the professional standards for research and publishing established by the counseling field.

Importantly, after engaging in the demanding process of manuscript development and submission, authors face a final challenge: coping with and responding to feedback from reviewers and editors. At best, authors can anticipate receiving the manuscript back from the journal's editor with a request for revision; revision and resubmission is a common part of the publication process (Kalpakjian & Meade, 2008). Sometimes, feedback can be discouraging and confusing. After spending a copious amount of time and energy developing a manuscript, it can be difficult to heed the critical suggestions of reviewers. Despite this, authors are urged to read all comments completely and address each suggestion. Maintaining an open and responsive approach to reviewer's and editor's feedback will assist authors in achieving a favorable outcome, which is successfully publishing in a professional counseling journal.

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# Counselor Education and Contemplative Pedagogy: An Exploration of Mindfulness Practices on the Development of Multicultural Competencies

Abby Dougherty

There is a growing interest in counselor education in the use of contemplative practices as a therapeutic and pedagogical approach. However, there is very little examining how contemplative pedagogical interventions can support counselor educators and their students learning the skills, attitudes, and beliefs needed to engage in multicultural competent practice. Major elements of contemplative pedagogy and practical applications for integrating contemplative practices into course work to support multiculturally competent practice will be explored.

*Keywords:* Counselor education, pedagogy, contemplative, mindfulness, multicultural, diversity

Multicultural competence is critical to effective and ethical counseling. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Program ([CACREP], 2009), the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2014) and the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) Multicultural Cultural Competencies (1996) all speak to the importance of culturally competent counseling practice. To engage in multiculturally competent counseling, counselors need an awareness of personal biases, values, and assumptions that make up their worldviews, and need to actively work to understand the worldview of their clients (Arredondo, et al., 1996; Sue & Sue, 2013). The current literature in counselor education that explores the use of pedagogical practices to support multicultural counselor education draws primarily from constructivist-developmental or modernist teaching approaches (Guiffrida, 2005). However, contemplative pedagogy is starting to emerge as a compelling alternative (Babatz & Bush, 2013).

Contemplative pedagogy may provide another valuable teaching method to support multicultural education in counseling. Contemplative pedagogy could support insightful self-reflection as well as provide students with skills to better regulate emotions that may halt the accommodation of new knowledge (Babatz & Bush, 2013; Berila, 2014). The purpose of this paper is to introduce contemplative pedagogy and explore how counselor educators can utilize a contemplative

pedagogy approach as well as contemplative practices to support counseling students in assimilating multicultural competencies. The author explores how constructivist-developmental approaches are used to support counseling students' ability to recognize multiple realities. The author then introduces contemplative pedagogy and contemplative practices and their utility for counselor educators who seek novel approaches for multicultural education.

## Recognizing Multiple Realities: Multicultural Counselor Education

A constructivist pedagogical approach is commonly utilized by counselor educators to teach multicultural competencies (Brubaker, Puig, Reese & Young, 2010). Constructivist developmental pedagogical approaches encourage counselors-in-training to explore multiple meanings as well as their own meaning making process. Eriksen and McAuliffe (2006) and Brubaker et al. (2010) addressed the implications of using a constructivist-developmental theory as a predictor of multicultural competence. Eriksen and McAuliffe (2001) discussed several reasons why counselor educators benefit from using a constructivist developmental perspective. These benefits included, (a) having an approach to teaching how to avoid categorical thinking that can occur when discussing social and cultural concerns, (b)

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emphasizing multiple perspectives, and (c) developing metacognitive awareness and empathy. For example, counselor educators who are using a constructivist-developmental approach may ask counseling students to explore their values and assumptions throughout their graduate programs. Counselor educators will lead counselors in training to explore how these beliefs inform their cognitive processes and how these cognitive processes reflect their cultural background to support metacognition and cultural identity awareness. However, for some students, the process of insightful reflection may be a challenging skill to learn and may be anxiety provoking. The application of a constructivist model may not lead to greater cognitive complexity as students may construct the wrong knowledge about multiculturalism in counseling as these students prefer to be “told” what they should know (Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005; Perkins, 1999). For example, counselor educators using a constructivist approach may ask their students to explore their cultural identity and how their identity influences their thinking and experience with privilege and oppression. The counselor educator using a constructivist approach may teach with excellence, but that does not mean the student will learn. Greening (1998) noted that without consistent mindfulness to the cognitive process, benefits of a constructivist approach may be questionable. The student may intelligently understand the material, but not how this is connected to their internal experiences. Due to the fact the difficult emotions can come up for students learning about privilege and oppression, they will want to be told what do, or seek out a technical understanding, but not engage in the self-reflection necessary to be a multiculturally competent counselor (Greening, 1998).

When exploring regularly utilized teaching interventions in a constructivist approach, experiential exercises, discussion, lecture, literature review, and self-reflective exercises (such as journaling) are often used to promote self-awareness (Brubaker et al., 2010; Vaughan, 2005). These exercises are intended to affect multiculturally competent counselors. Difficult dialogues occur when discussing topics such as racism, sexism, classism, and disabilities (Brubaker et al., 2010). Some students will develop an awareness of their resistance while other students, unable to sit in discomfort for long periods, will consciously and unconsciously disengage from the material and the discussion (Brubaker et al., 2012). Exploring historical accounts of social inequalities can be painful for counselor educators and students alike, particularly when there is an awareness of how current systemic inequalities are maintained by privileged students (Brubaker et al., 2010; Curtis et al., 2009). After exploring cultural competencies and their intersection with societal inequalities, students are often asked to

engage in immersion exercises to gain exposure to different cultural perspectives and to reflect on any stereotypical thoughts or attitudes that arise within them. Despite a semester of classes focused on cultural competencies, self and other awareness exercises, some students’ initial emotional reactions and judgments to the material may hinder openness to metacognitive reflections. For even well intended students, this may mean a lack of awareness of how they perpetuate socially unequal relationships with their clients (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009).

The developing awareness of a counseling student’s cultural identity as well as their own awareness of metacognitive process is developmental in nature. Novice counselors, unlike expert counselors, may not yet have learned how to engage and use metacognition strategies (Chi, Bassok, Lewis, Reimann, & Glaser, 1987; Etringer & Hillerbrand, 1995). Counseling students’ ability to observe their own cognitive process, and that of their clients, takes considerable practice (Granello, 2010; Granello, 2011). Students who hold rigid belief systems may struggle with developing the cognitive complexity needed to be able to effectively shift perspectives - a necessary skill for self-directed learning and providing multiculturally competent counseling (Granello, 2010; Jennings & Skovholt, 1999).

Group discussion is often used to support metacognitive awareness, critical thinking and the students’ cultural identity development (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2001; Vaughan, 2005). The accommodation of new knowledge, particularly with subject material such as race, prejudice, and privilege may lead students to exhibit defensiveness as they let go of previously held assumptions (Eriksen, 2008). However, some students may not be able to tolerate the distress of cultural diversity education that challenges deeply held beliefs and those students will accommodate their beliefs rather than assimilate new multicultural knowledge. This experience would be akin to Helm’s reintegration status stage of white racial identity development (Sue & Sue, 2013). During this stage, white students who had made previous attempts to address their cognitive dissonance about white privilege, will return to idealizing white European American culture (Sue & Sue, 2013). Deal and Hyde (2004) stated that this can be a pedagogical challenge when the resistance manifests itself as, “provocative statements, superficial engagement, silence, or censorship of others” (p.74). When not handled effectively, discussions can lead to instances of repressive tolerance.

Repressive tolerance occurs when there is a discussion that seems to suggest freedom of ideas, because of students’ diverse perspectives; however these ideas are discussed within a dominant ideology

paradigm (Brookfield, 2005). This classroom dynamic can occur when students have not learned skills to tolerate their discomfort in having a discussion about race and privilege. Not having these affective regulatory skills can stagnate the students' developmental process and inhibit students in assimilating new knowledge and developing a deeper level of cognitive complexity that is needed to practice multicultural competencies. Counselor educators may unknowingly perpetuate classroom hierarchies that support a Euro-American centric dominant ideology as Freire (1993) noted. Freire (1993) discussed the importance of equality between teacher and student in co-constructing knowledge as a way to cultivate critical consciousness. If students are going to reflect on ways that they have experienced privilege or oppression, they need the tools to explore their internal and external reality (Berila, 2014). A contemplative pedagogical approach can support the necessary classroom conditions and provide the tools needed to engage in this introspective work.

### What is Contemplative Pedagogy?

Contemplative pedagogy has been defined as, "involve(ing) teaching methods designed to cultivate deepened awareness, concentration, and insight" (Vanderbilt University, 2012). The definition of contemplative pedagogy should not be mistaken as merely a set of classroom practices. Contemplative pedagogy is an intentional commitment by the educator to approach teaching and learning non judgmentally, with compassion, and a present-centered focus (Grossenbacher & Parkin, 2006). A contemplative teaching approach is as much a philosophical stance or lived experience, as an intervention or practice utilized in the classroom. While there is some emerging research in counselor education regarding the use of mindfulness practices as a pedagogical tool (Buser, Buser, Petson, & Seraydarian, 2012; Greason & Cashwell, 2009; Rothaupt & Morgan, 2007), contemplative pedagogy expands the discussion by drawing from multiple traditions and contemplative practices. Contemplative pedagogy draws from many contemplative traditions that support a state of mindfulness, thus it is worth noting that contemplative pedagogy is also referred to as mindfulness education (Beer, 2010; Palmer, 2007; Rendon, 2009).

Contemplative pedagogy may provide an approach that offers a holistic teaching and learning experience. Contemplative pedagogy's focus on developing reflectivity, concentration, insight, perspective shifting, awareness, as well as developing compassion and empathy seems aligned for supporting counseling students' learning material that challenges their sense of

self. Current research into contemplative pedagogy in other disciplines such as psychology (Grossenbacher & Parkin, 2006), education studies (Repetti, 2010), social work education (Lynn, 2010), music education (Roberts-Wolfe, Sacchet, & Britton, 2009; Shipee, 2010), nursing education (Shapiro, Schwartz, & Bronner, 1998), philosophy (Kahane, 2009), and religious studies (Murray, 2008) has shown that it can support increased concentration and attention (Drybye, Thomas, & Shanafelt, 2006; Grossenbacher & Parkin, 2006), well-being (Drybye, Thomas, & Shanafelt, 2006; Grossenbacher & Parkin, 2006; Lazar et al., 2005; Roberts-Wolfe et al., 2009; Wenger, 2013), social connection (Hutcherson, Seppala, & Gross, 2008; Jennings, 2008), generosity (Jennings, 2008), creativity (Jennings, 2008; Roberts-Wolfe et al., 2009), insight (Grossenbacher & Parkin, 2006; Jennings, 2008; Wenger, 2013), and deepen understanding of course work (Chugh & Bazerman, 2007; Grossenbacher & Parkin, 2006; Jennings, 2008; Wenger, 2013).

### Contemplative Practices in the Classroom

Contemplative pedagogies utilize mindfulness-based practices focusing on the present moment, developing insight, recognizing multiple viewpoints from a nonjudgmental stance, and developing compassion and empathy (Jennings, 2008). There are a number of contemplative practices from which counselor educators can draw as described in Figure 1.

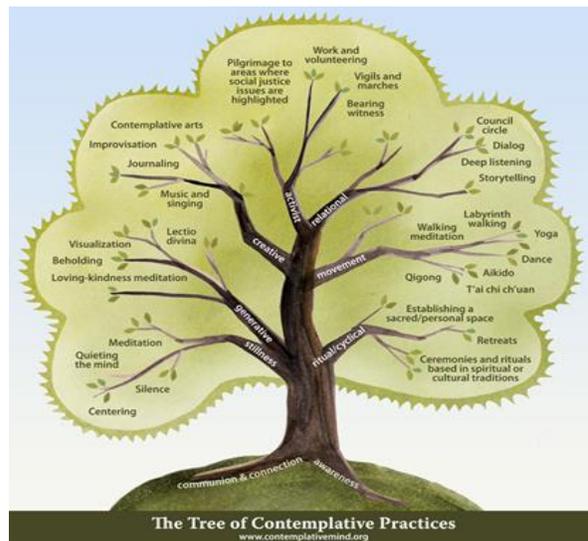


FIGURE 1

The Tree of Contemplative Practices

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Some examples of contemplative exercises being utilized include journaling, beholding (object, sound, painting), reading silently, *lectio divina* (meditating on what you read), meditation, yoga, and mindfulness activities (Vanderbilt University, 2012; Repetti, 2010).

### The Judging Quality of Mind

Counselor educators who are utilizing a contemplative pedagogy can model for students the use of contemplative practices that focus on the awareness of cognitive processes in a nonjudgmental manner. Kabat-Zinn (1990) noted the importance of observing through mindfulness practice the context, development, and process of judgments that frequently arise in the mind. Kabat-Zinn (1990) discussed how mindfulness practices can be used as a phenomenological tool to observe the unfolding of a reaction process. The process of observing the judging-quality-of-mind should also be approached by intentionally suspending judgment, by taking a nonjudgmental stance (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). This process of developing a nonjudgmental presence may provide students with an opportunity to recognize and identify their judging-quality-of-mind that they possess about diversity, before owning them as their personal identity.

For example, consider the white student who identifies the classroom discussion on white privilege as reverse racism. When counselor educators use contemplative practices in their pedagogical approach to multicultural studies, there is the possibility for stronger engagement when students are challenged by having to assimilate multicultural education that will shift their own value and belief systems (Berila, 2014). Students may be more open and receptive to understanding their learning process, rather than being reactive and conforming to the status quo, if they can respond to their internal experience as separate from their sense of self. For example, if students can speak about their process of understanding as an affective, emotional, cognitive, response separate from their sense of self, they may be more responsive to feedback that differs from their own belief system (Berila, 2014).

Contemplative pedagogy can be used as an approach to teaching multicultural competencies, however contemplative practices can also be embedded into the counseling curricula and used as a method of inquiry (Burggraf & Grossenbacher, 2007). An example of such embedding would be counseling students being asked to reflect on their cultural identity using a cultural identity model. Using a contemplative approach, students may be asked to periodically check-in within themselves to examine their thoughts and affective states. This process may bring about deeper levels of awareness and serves as an exercise to support reflectivity. Counselors, who actively attend to cultural

dimensions in counseling, must be able to engage in a reflective process that recognizes multiple realities (Sue & Sue, 2013). Multiculturally competent counselors need to have a deeper sense of self-awareness (Arredondo, et al., 1996). Contemplative approaches, such as mindfulness practices, focus on the observation of one's thoughts and emotions in a nonjudgmental, total acceptance manner that supports counselors-in-training developing a deeper sense of self-awareness (Schure, Christopher, & Christopher, 2008). Students have an opportunity, through using contemplative activities, to develop a deeper sense of any unconscious cognitions or affective responses in the present moment.

The process of using mindfulness as a learning strategy supports the development of self-reflection (Dray & Wisneskim, 2011). In classroom practice, students who are asked to share their cultural identities with one another could be asked to view their identities as objects outside of themselves and then be asked to reflect on their experiences. Students may, in the process of exploring their cultural identity, cling to their habitual thought patterns and self-judgments. Students who are asked to nonjudgmentally explore this reaction are likely to be more open to conversations in the classroom about cultural differences because their anxiety rises (Berila, 2014). They become aware of a descriptive versus an interpretational reaction, which could be explored before engaging in the conversation (Dray & Wisneskim, 2011). Gudykunst and Kim (2003) defined descriptive reactions as observational data without social significance. An example of a descriptive reaction might be, Jane will not look me in the eye during our sessions together (just the facts). Gudykunst and Kim (2003) defined interpretational reactions as the social significance ascribed to the description (what does the behavior mean). Counseling students must remember that the behavior displayed in their counseling sessions can have multiple meanings (Sue & Sue, 2013). In the above example, Jane's not looking me in the eye during our sessions together might be; (a) a sign of disrespect; (b) because in some Asian cultures lack of eye contact can mean respect to an individual in a role of authority. The strengthening of students' abilities to be aware in the present moment takes on a cognitive perspective that encourages acceptance and a nonjudgmental stance that can support students' awareness of multiple realities. This self-reflective process can strengthen the student's awareness of his/her fears that may result in flight from the diversity topic or lead to prejudicial inferences. This exercise can also be an opportunity for students to practice self-compassion and recognize feelings of guilt, shame, depression, anger, and resistance that may arise (Berila, 2014).

There are numerous research studies that support

regular mindfulness practices with emotional regulation (Allen, Chambers & Gullone, 2009; Erisman & Roemer, 2010; Goleman, 2003; Linehan, Bohus, & Lynch, 2007; Nielsen & Kaszniak, 2006). Grace (2011) noted students who employ meditative practices have an easier time with self-regulating behaviors and can move more easily from a stressful to a positive state. Thornton and McEntee (1995) and Berlia (2014) found that mindfulness practices focus an attentiveness and a nonjudgmental stance, and can provide the learner with a compassionate mindset that may ease the fear, guilt, and or shame associated with unresolved identity conflicts. Multicultural education enables the learner to shift focus from the “physical domain of substance and tangible (what we do) to the cognitive and affective domains of how and why we process information the way we do” (Thornton & McEntee, 1995, p.254). Mindfulness based practices can help a learner to explore their inner experience in a nonjudgmental manner and therefore aid in cultural self-reflection (Berlia, 2014).

For students who are engaging in difficult dialogues about diversity and societal systematic social injustices, the regular use of mindfulness-based practices can help with perspective-shifting and changes in cognitive frames (for example, shame or guilt and defensive prejudicial beliefs). The student has the opportunity to bring analysis to their thought processes before identifying with them as a belief system that is reflective of their personal identity, thus enabling them to not be forced to see the conversation that may challenge deeply held beliefs as personal attacks (Berlia, 2014). By cultivating awareness and attention, counseling students can examine their worldview assumptions through acute awareness of their words and behaviors (Langer, 1989; Thomas, 2006).

### Applications in the Classroom

I have used a five minute Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction meditation, followed by a YouTube clip of Kabat-Zinn (2013) discussing the nine attitudes one should cultivate with a mindfulness practice, in my multicultural counseling course. Kabat-Zinn (2013) identified nine attitudes of mindfulness that one seeks to cultivate through mindfulness practice. The nine attitudes include: (a) non-judging, (b) patience, (c) beginners mind, (d) trust, (e) non-striving, (f) letting go, (g) gratitude, (h) generosity, and (i) acceptance. After engaging in the short meditation, and then watching one of the short videos describing an aspect of a mindful attitude, I would ask students to seek to cultivate the one attitude towards the course material that we were focusing on that day. For example, during a class which was focusing on cultural development models, students

watched the Kabat-Zinn’s YouTube (2013) video on letting-go. In the video Kabat-Zinn (2013), discussed how monkey traps are set by carving out a coconut, placing a banana inside, and making a hole just large enough for a monkey’s hand to go inside. In order for the monkey’s hand not to get trapped, they must be willing to let go of the banana. This metaphor was linked to the process that occurs when white students confront their own white privilege. I then did a mindful check-in, asking students to just notice and not judge their current lived experience. I used this check-in to process, as a class, any difficult emotions that students were experiencing in the moment while they were learning the material.

I have also used “beholding” in my family counseling course as a way to observe the layers of assumptions a counselor-in-training may have about a family, based on their cultural identity. Beholding is meditating on an object, sound, image (Contemplative Mind in Society, 2015). After introducing multicultural counseling in a family counseling context through class readings, I used 30 minutes to introduce mindfulness to the class using mini-lecture and experiential exercises. Following this introduction, at the end of each class, I displayed a picture of a culturally diverse family and asked students to meditate on the image, using the image as an object to focus their meditation. After a five minute period engaging in “beholding” I would ask them to reflect on the new material learned in class that day, and to see if they noticed any new aspects about the assumptions they had of this family that were reflective of their cultural identities. Using this process, I observed that students felt more comfortable sharing their insights, took more time to explore their experiences in the here-and-now, and students asked me for more opportunities to engage in different types of mindfulness practices.

### The Importance of Practice

One unique aspect of contemplative pedagogy is that it focuses on the personal transformation of the teacher as well as the student (Brown, n.d.). This is a holistic approach that recognizes the interconnected nature of growth and development for both student and teacher in the learning process (Barbezat, & Bush, 2013; Brown, n.d.). It is an essential component of contemplative pedagogy that the teacher engages in their own on-going contemplative practice (Brown, n.d.). Schoeberlein (2009) noted several benefits for teachers who utilize the practices in the classroom, these include: (a) strengthening teachers’ focus, (b) enhancing awareness and emotional regulations skills, (c) reducing stress, (d) improving well-being, and (e) enhancing classroom affection.

Contemplative practices may offer counselor

educators a lens through which to continually evaluate their own deeply held biases. Dray and Wisneskim (2011) explored the importance of teachers' continual self-evaluation of their own attributes that could contribute to communicating with students in a prejudicial manner. Contemplative practices, such as mindfulness practices, can promote counselor educator self-reflection and enable an examination of their cultural frame of references and their communication style with students (Dray & Wisneskim, 2011). Counselor educators, who continually bring mindful awareness to their self-reflection process in communicating with students, may have greater sensitivities in their own behaviors and communications. Additionally, individuals who regularly engage in mindfulness exercises seem to have an easier time recognizing how ruminative thought processes are affecting their experiences in the present moment (Abbey et al., 2004).

### Limitations on the Use of Contemplative Pedagogy

As research on contemplative pedagogy begins to emerge, there are some noted limitations. One concern is that the roots of contemplative pedagogy and practice are derived from religious practices. Most the major world religions, Buddhists, Native Americans, Jews, Christians, and Muslims all engage in some form of contemplative practice (Coburn et al., 2011). Due to contemplative pedagogy religious origins, some counselor educators in secular settings may have concerns about its usefulness as a practical learning intervention. Contemplative, however, does not equate to religious (Coburn et al., 2011). Contemplative pedagogy in no way encourages a particular worldview. Secular and medicalized versions of contemplative practices (as discussed in this manuscript) and mindfulness are being increasingly utilized in a variety of education settings (Coburn et al., 2011).

McDunagh (2014) discussed how some people will not be ready to explore their inner self through the use of contemplative practices. Berlia (2014) noted the importance of educators, who are using a contemplative pedagogical approach, informing their students that the process of noticing internal experiences may bring up traumatic experiences. Thus, students should be provided information on where and how to receive counseling services. Berlia (2014) further noted that educators need to be prepared for what might emerge for students who identify as marginalized as they turn inward and explore their experiences with oppression.

Additionally, the lack of empirical research into the practical applications of contemplative methods may limit educators' willingness to experiment with such

methods. While most of the research literature currently available has focused on the impact of contemplative practices on the students' experiences with therapeutic presence and self-care, there is still little research exploring the experience of mindfulness and as a tool in multicultural education. Finally, there is a need to develop educational measures that assess the impact of contemplative practices and mindfulness within counselor education. There have been several studies using qualitative methods, but few controlled, quantitative studies.

### Conclusion

The focus of this manuscript was to explore the implications of utilizing a contemplative pedagogical approach to teach counseling students multicultural competencies. Counselor education still suffers from a lack of applied pedagogical theory (Brubaker et al., 2010). A contemplative approach may have the potential to produce positive counseling education outcomes (e.g increased emotional regulation, stronger development of metacognitive awareness, greater ability for reflectivity and perspective shifting (Greason & Cashwell, 2009; Jennings, 2008). Contemplative pedagogy in counselor education also has the potential to support multicultural awareness and competency development. The skills that are developed when one engages in contemplative exercises such as attention, focus, compassion, a nonjudgmental stance, the ability to see alternative view points, and reactive awareness are all skills that could support counselor educators teaching multicultural competencies (Berlia, 2014).

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# The Impact of Counselor Education Training on Student-Parents

Kirsten W. Murray, Kimberly J. Desmond, and Shawn P. Parmanand

When pursuing education, students experience a variety of stressors that can be exacerbated by external pressures. For students who are also parents, the responsibilities inherent in student and parent roles can lead to increased stress and attrition. Improving enrollment and retention of parents enhances student, and ultimately clinical, diversity. This article explores research on the student-parent experience. Suggestions are made for how counselors, faculty members, departments, and universities can contribute to the success of student-parents.

*Keywords:* Counselors-in-training, student-parents, retention, diversity

Students and higher education are consistently evolving. Degree programs are shifting to meet a variety of student needs (Kirby, Biever, Martinez, & Gomez, 2004) and students who identify as “non-traditional” can now be considered the new typical (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2002). Here, we consider two common conditions of the non-traditional student: (a) delaying college enrollment and once enrolled, (b) caring for dependents, most typically children (NCES, 2002). The stress of balancing student and parent roles at the beginning of a degree program predisposes students to attrition (Daugherty & Lane, 1999). Although we don’t typically conceptualize privilege in terms of parental status, there is inherent power in juggling fewer roles as a student. Successful negotiations of parent and student roles is a concern to universities and counselor educators alike; difficulties aligning parental and student status can lead to attrition, challenges with enrollment, and decreased graduation rates (Springer, Parker, & Leviten-Reid, 2009). Springer et al. (2009), found that graduate student-parents are less likely to finish their degree when compared with non-parent graduate students. Quimby and O’Brien (2006) noted the fastest growing population in higher education are female students over the age of 25 and suggested that female students over the age of 25 are frequently balancing their student role with parenting. These statistics are especially true when examining enrollment in counselor education; currently, women’s enrollment outnumbers men’s at a rate of nearly two to one

(Michel, Hall, Hays, & Runyan, 2013). Discouragingly, one of the many reasons women end up leaving academic settings is due to the tension caused as a result of balancing responsibilities with family life (Frasch, Mason, Stacy, Goulden, & Hoffman, 2007). If higher education continues to privilege traditional student roles by recruiting and retaining a homogenous group, it is likely that the diversity of our student community will be diluted and the counselors we prepare for the workforce will be less diverse. Higher education, and counselor education specifically, is challenged with recruiting and retaining more diverse students so the professional community is enhanced by various perspectives and backgrounds (Michel et al., 2013).

## The Student-Parent Experience

It is necessary for counselor educators to understand student experiences and perceptions of the larger higher education system. Because scholarship on counseling graduate student-parents remains limited, we expanded our review to include research about diverse student groups from post-secondary and graduate programs. Even with this expansion, research examining the experiences of student-parents is sparse. Upon the authors’ review of the most current literature, topics of work-life balance, self and relational awareness, stressors, and relationship enrichment for student-parents follows.

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## Work Life Balance

Work-life balance is described as a lack of conflict or friction between work and family roles and responsibilities (Chen & Slan-Jerusalim, 2009). According to Chen and Slan-Jerusalim (2009) work-life balance disruptions usually take one of three forms: time, strain, or behavior. A time-based conflict is the extent to which a particular role, like parenting, competes for a person's time. A strain-based conflict occurs when stressors, such as parenting, interfere with the ability to perform in another role (e.g., student or employee). Finally, behavior-based conflict is present when the behavioral requirements of one role, like extensive travel for work, are incompatible with other roles, such as being a parent (Chen & Slan-Jerusalim, 2009). These types of disruptions are commonly experienced by student-parents and can contribute to attrition.

Negotiating disruptions in work-life balance is constant. One cannot avoid disruptions, but individuals can strengthen resiliency factors in order to successfully negotiate many roles and demands. High self-efficacy (beliefs about one's ability to accomplish tasks and face challenges as they arise) is a key component when navigating many demands. As it turns out, confidence in one's ability to encounter and solve the disruptions of time, strain, or behavior is a strong predictor of satisfying work-life balance (Chen & Slan-Jerusalim, 2009).

## Self and Other Awareness

As graduate students grow in self-awareness, their family relationships can also be changed (Murray & Kleist, 2011). In counselor training, there is a clear expectation that personal growth and self-awareness will contribute to students' overall personal-wellness (Luke & Kiweewa, 2010; CACREP, 2009). Counseling students are asked to explore their value systems and patterns of relating to others, which can result in relationship changes (Furr & Carroll, 2003). These changes, however, can be a predictor of relationship stress as student transformations disrupt homeostasis for the family system (Blume, 1997). Sori, Wetchler, Ray, and Niedner (1996) explained that graduate students who are training in family counseling are often challenged with confronting problems in their own marriage or family of origin. Murray and Kleist (2011) conducted a qualitative study of counseling graduate students and found that their couple relationships transformed as they were exposed to the discovery of new awareness. This awareness resulted in personal and family relationship changes. The relationship changes described were impacted by feelings of supportiveness and gratitude within the couple relationship. Because

this personal growth is so critical to training, we do not argue for limits on personal awareness in our curriculum. Rather, we ask counselor educators to help students to fully acknowledge the impact this growth can have on their family relationships and the stressors that could ensue.

In their study on the impacts of counselor training, Furr and Carroll (2003) asked students to describe the nature and impact of critical incidents that occurred in their graduate training. Findings indicated that critical incidents occurring outside the counseling program were most frequently cited as sources for growth. The authors suggested that many of the incidents described involved personal relationships that were changing as a result of learning that occurred in the counseling graduate program. As graduate students apply what they are learning both in the program and in their personal life, ways of interacting with family members may also begin to change. For example, students may begin to use their basic counseling skills (i.e. reflection of feeling, active listening, restatement of cognitive content, summarizing) when communicating in their personal life. The use of these skills may increase feelings of connectedness and validation in relationships with others (Murray & Kleist, 2011). Preparing students and family members for potential relational change could be beneficial in students' interpersonal relationships and decrease stress in graduate studies.

## Stressors

Stress is a common experience for students (Springer et al., 2009). Though student-parent stressors share similarities with those of traditional students, our review of the literature shows that student-parent stressors additionally encompass a negotiation between two distinct systems: the family system and university system. The interplay of these two environments yields a qualitatively different stress across domains of time, energy, money, and support (Gilbert, 1982; Kirby et al., 2004; Lawson & Gaushell, 1991; Sori et al., 1996). Research on the impact of stress in higher education has been conducted with four distinct student populations (a) counseling graduate students, (b) marriage and family therapy graduate students, (c) undergraduate/graduate students engaged in a weekend format of education, and (d) graduate students from a variety of disciplines. The stress related consequences of higher education for student-parents include patterns of triangulation, limited time and energy for partners and families, low levels of family support, financial dependence, and finding job prospects.

Lawson and Gaushell (1991) identified patterns of triangulation among counselors-in-training and their children. When comparing counseling students'

intergenerational family relationships with a nonclinical sample, Lawson and Gaushell (1991) found that counselor trainees have a greater tendency to over-involve their children in their marriage as a means to relieve relationship stress. This difference is indicative of a source of relationship stress for counseling graduate students in particular, and also sheds light on the tendency to triangulate as a response to stress.

Sori et al. (1996) explored the impacts of graduate training on marriage and family therapy student relationships, and found that both students and their spouses agreed that “too little time for our own marriage/family” was the highest ranked stressor (p. 265). The second ranked stressor, also agreed upon by both spouses, was having “too little energy for our own marriage/family” (Sori et al., 1996, p. 265). When bringing focus specifically to students’ relationships with their children, participants expressed feelings of guilt as they struggled to find enough time and energy for their children.

Kirby et al. (2004) surveyed students attending weekend college programs across a variety of disciplines (both graduate and undergraduate) and found further stressors in students’ family lives impacting family, work, and social life. Results indicated that school significantly interfered with family time and events, and single parents had lower levels of family support and cooperation. These results reinforce the stress of having multiple demands on time, and also draw attention to the unique, within group experiences of single parents. Though single parents navigate similar stressors as partnered parents do, their single contexts lay the foundation for unique experiences. In this case, what is unique is lower levels of family support and cooperation. These findings remind us that the transition into student roles impacts far more than the students themselves. Remaining cognizant of student-parents’ family contexts, demands, and supports adds clarity to the student-parent experience.

Stressful impacts of higher education also have the potential to extend beyond graduation, as Gilbert (1982) highlighted when examining the impacts of graduate training on the family. She noted two sources of friction for students’ families: employment prospects and financial dependence. Finding employment after degree completion can be challenging (Gilbert 1982; Wolverson, 2011). When increased difficulty accompanies the job search process, families find the process increasingly stressful, especially when reflecting on the years of sacrifice that often accompany higher education for students’ families (Gilbert, 1982). When the pay-off of employment is further delayed, increased dependence on other financial sources may contribute to family stress and friction as students and their spouses experience a loss of power when

providing for themselves and their children. The stressful impacts of higher education are plentiful for student-parents and extend across factors of time, finances, cooperation, and support. Yet, in spite of these stressors, many student-parents continue to pursue degrees (Kirby et al., 2004).

## Enriched Relationships

Though stressful, the impacts of adding a student role to an already active parent role was ultimately enriching for many participants in the research already reviewed (Kirby et al., 2004; Sori et al., 1996). For students enrolled in a weekend format program, Kirby et al. (2004) found that student-parents more frequently cited positive aspects of higher education than the stress of interference with family events. These student-parents found that attending school enriched family life, set a good example for family members (especially children), and improved time management and cooperation skills. Greater family support was a significant predictor of lower stress for these participants, with partnered students reporting higher levels of support and cooperation. In addition, authors reported a surprising finding reflecting a low level of concern for child care problems, with only 1.5% of the entire sample (n = 566) reporting it as a concern. After conducting a content analysis of both stressful and enhancing factors, the authors determined that the positive effects of returning to school in a weekend format might mitigate the stress that emerges when students combine family and student roles. More specifically, the weekend format may be more conducive for other members to care for children while the parent returns to school (Kirby et al., 2004; Sori et al., 1996).

More benefits of attending school while negotiating family life appeared in the study conducted with marriage and family therapy students (Sori et al., 1996). In this study, the students reported on the impact training had on their personal relationships and rated the following enriching relationship factors: (a) “awareness of normal life cycle problems,” (b) “accepting own part in marital/family problems,” and (c) “greater awareness of own humanness” (Sori et al., 1996, p. 266). Further, as students progressed through training, they began to identify problems with a perspective that emphasized life-cycle development and mutual causality, while increasing their self-awareness. Participating students and their spouses reported that these shifts in thinking significantly enhanced their family relationships. Though this new worldview is critical to enriching relationships, successful adaptation is first grounded in supportive relationships (Sori et al., 1996).

## Recommendations from the Literature

As mentioned previously, a student's perceived lack of ability to balance time between family and school obligations can lead to increased stress and attrition (Smith, Maroney, Nelson, Able & Able, 2006). Several recommendations emerged when considering how to best support student-parents throughout their education. Interventions fostering negotiation, role flexibility, time and task management, and re-evaluation strategies surface as essential (Cron, 2001; Saginak & Saginak, 2005). Recommendations for faculty members, departments, and universities focus on promoting education and awareness among student-parents (Kirby, et.al, 2004; Quimby & O'Brien, 2006). A more detailed look at these supportive and preventative interventions follows, focusing specifically on how counselors, faculty members, departments, and universities can foster support for students as they integrate the roles and responsibilities of student and parent.

### Counselor-level

Gilbert (1982) identified graduate school as a time of great stress for students and their families. This time of significant stress is marked by a need for university student personnel intervention. As members of university intervention teams, counselors bring valuable skills that facilitate self-reflection, effective communication, and preventative education. When entering counseling with student-parents, Quimby and O'Brien (2006) suggested avoiding time intensive interventions, so as not to impinge on the already busy lives of student-parents. They further suggest offering childcare and providing meals when facilitating group sessions as additional means that support student-parents seeking counseling services.

Facilitating counseling from a systemic perspective that seeks involvement from student families and support systems is a critical component when working with student-parents (Cron, 2001; Quimby & O'Brien, 2006; Saginak & Saginak, 2005). As parents experience the increased stress that accompanies a return to school, strong self-efficacy, solid social supports, and secure relationship attachments become increasingly relevant (Quimby & O'Brien, 2006). Helping student-parents understand how to access these supportive resources can be crucial to their success in graduate studies. Seminars and workshops provided by counselors are an effective way to inform students about the stress of graduate school and to provide them with unique strategies to cope and respond to this stress (Brannock, Litten, & Smith, 2000). Assessing for risk factors of

insecure attachment, low self-efficacy, and limited social supports remain crucial when working with parents at risk of attrition (Cron, 2001; Quimby & O'Brien, 2006; Saginak & Saginak, 2005).

If such factors as those mentioned above should present themselves, counselors may respond with such interventions as assertiveness training, time balancing techniques, and involvement in interpersonal and parenting support groups (Quimby & O'Brien, 2006). Counselors are encouraged to help students discover and maintain self worth, increase parental confidence, and manage stress while also facilitating systemic interventions. Additional interventions include teaching study skills, test-taking strategies, organizational skills, time management strategies, relaxation techniques, and tactics for managing multiple roles (Quimby & O'Brien, 2006). Counselor educators may respond by providing referral sources for counseling services and incorporating wellness strategies as part of the curriculum.

When working with student-parents and their families, counselors may begin by facilitating family member reflection and evaluation of their current roles and investments in the family system (Cron, 2001; Saginak & Saginak, 2005). Once the current roles, time and emotional investments are identified, the counselor and family can begin to co-construct necessary adaptations the system will make, as one family member begins to integrate the roles and responsibilities of being a student. Furr and Carroll (2003) examined the positive and negative experiences of a counselor training program on student-parents' families. They suggested that the change in personal relationships stems from the learning process associated with being in a counseling program. Therefore, helping students to understand changes experienced in a graduate program is essential to fostering pro-social communication and coping strategies for possible relational changes (Furr & Carroll, 2003). Regularly attending to family roles and responsibilities can provide a healthy work-life balance that greatly improves many other areas of a student-parents life (Chen & Slan-Jersualim, 2009). Maintaining an active balance of labor in the family system via role flexibility and open negotiation of home tasks and child-care is recommended for student-parents (Cron, 2001; Saginak & Saginak, 2005). Throughout negotiation processes, counselors can support and promote clear communication of family member needs, empowering each member as they seek to meet personal, relationship, and household demands (Quimby & O'Brien, 2006). Student-parent resources and support systems, however, extend beyond the responsibilities of university counseling programs. Involvement from faculty members, departments, and university wide structures are necessary when implementing strategies

to retain student-parents in graduate education (Quimby & O'Brien, 2006).

### Faculty-level

When it comes to supporting student-parents and their success, faculty mentoring is crucial to student success in the education system (Hazler & Carney, 1993; Furr & Carroll, 2003). Not only can faculty mentor students on the details of parent friendly university policies and navigating the job market while pregnant or parenting (Springer et al., 2009), but they can also offer social support and establish norms that build a sense of community among students (Gilbert, 1982; Hazler & Carney, 1993). Lovitts (2001) contended a strong relationship with an advisor can be the difference between success or failure in graduate study. Also important to note is that student-parents are equally responsible for the success of their relationships with faculty. Williams (2004) advocated for early and explicit communication between faculty and student advisees when it comes to family matters and possible student-parent role conflicts. For example, strain-based conflicts arise when stressors, such as parenting, interfere with roles like being a student (Chen & Slan-Jersalim 2009). The frequency of these conflicts can be lessened when a student-parent is able to balance multiple roles (e.g., parent, worker, student) effectively through open communication with faculty members (Williams, 2004). Faculty and students are encouraged to enter dialogues explicitly stating their needs and expectations in order to actively co-construct supportive and flexible solutions that meet the needs of all involved (Williams, 2004). These dialogues not only create a foundation for successful relationships and a fruitful education, but can also expand faculty awareness of student-parent experiences, common resources, and helpful information to share with future students (Williams, 2004).

Unique experiences for counseling faculty and students emerge when considering the requirements of counselor training. Counselor training programs embrace self-reflection and examination as a critical component of a training curriculum (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2009, Furr & Carroll, 2003.). Students experience intra-personal awareness of their emotions and patterns of behavior while also expanding their inter-personal awareness of relationship patterns (Murray & Kleist, 2011). Because this level of affective learning often surprises students, counselor educators are encouraged to provide supportive orientations to students and their families that prompt students to expect self-examination and unanticipated personal changes as a result of their experiences in the program (Furr & Carroll, 2003). Beyond the prevention efforts

of orientations, counselor educators must strike a difficult balance as they support students in their personal growth while simultaneously avoiding dual relationships (ACA, 2014). As students engage in processes of self-reflection and personal growth, they also experience events of personal significance outside of the program (Murray & Kleist, 2011). Counselor educators are encouraged to approach the impact of these events with sensitivity, and be cautious to not fulfill a counselor role with their students. Counselor educators must engage in the balancing act of attending to students' holistic development while encouraging them to reach out to resources that support their personal development (for example, making counseling referrals) (ACA, 2014). According to Furr and Carroll (2003), these faculty efforts, in combination with departmental and university resources, build a systemic foundation for student-parents that is supportive, responsive, laying the groundwork for academic success.

### Departmental-level

Department and faculty collaborations can be a powerful force when working in conjunction to support and retain student-parents. Often student-parents are less likely to finish their degrees than nonparent graduate students due to the difficulties of balancing their student role with parenting (Quimby & O'Brien, 2006). Preventative education, in the form of student orientations, stress/time management workshops, and strategy sessions designed to help students navigate work, school, and family roles emerge as sustaining departmental elements to all students, especially student-parents (Kirby et al., 2004). Orientations that include discussions about the family-life interface may serve to alleviate initial student fears and set a tone that emphasizes personal wellness (Springer et al., 2009). Included in these seminars should be information related to the potential personal and academic strain that the student-parent can expect as they progress in their graduate program (Smith et al., 2006). Departments can also promote a family friendly environment by encouraging family members to attend orientations and departmental social events (Springer et al., 2009). In addition, graduate programs can also provide resources and referrals for both on and off campus assistance with job searches and opportunities for childcare (Kallio, 1995). Support from the family system is one of many indicators of academic success or failure. Academic learning and growth can create stress in the family system but also contribute to positive experiences for families (Gilbert, 1982; Kirby et al., 2004). Achieving a family friendly department culture alleviates student isolation, recognizes and values life activities outside of the university structure,

and establishes norms of support among students and faculty (Springer et al., 2009).

Departments can also become active in assisting student-parents in gaining access to information. Departments can serve as networking agents that connect parents with community resources, helpful policies, and university links (Springer et al., 2009). Support of this networking can occur by adapting a cohort model, connecting student-parents to support groups, or posting pertinent information on bulletin boards and web pages (Springer et al., 2009). When students are well connected with one another while seeking and finding information, they not only share resources, but they are better able to cope with conflicts between family and school responsibilities (Kirby et al., 2004).

### University-level

Achieving a family friendly culture for students is a commitment that extends beyond faculty and department responsibilities. A review of university wide policies, facilities, and resources becomes significant when establishing norms of student-parent support (Springer et al., 2009; Kirby et al., 2004). Sori et al. (1996) found the highest ranked stressor that both students and their spouses agree upon is the lack of time for own marriage/family. Prioritizing time for your own marriage and family happens to conflict with the professional recommendations student-parents give to clients who are seeking couple counseling. Furthermore, student-parents express feelings of guilt about their lack of time and energy for their own children (Springer et al., 2009). Therefore, policies that support extended graduation deadlines, part-time program options, and parent-centered class schedules remain both attractive and beneficial to student-parents (Kirby et al., 2004; Springer et al., 2009). Additional shifts in university policies that allow students to maintain an enrolled status when on parental leave can preserve student benefits, such as medical insurance and also can result in a more stable, seamless, and supportive university environment for new and expecting student-parents (Springer et al., 2009). Universities can make shifts in their available resources and facilities that include the creation of opportunities for child care, affordable dependent health insurance options, and family friendly adaptations to physical spaces (e.g., lactation rooms, changing tables, food service high chairs, and play areas) (Springer et al., 2009). The availability of these campus resources can help with strain-based conflicts that may occur when parenting interferes with the role of being a student especially since academic success or failure is connected to the functioning of the family system (Gilbert, 1982; Kirby et al., 2004). Further, the

described family friendly amenities can be indicated on a campus map (Springer et al., 2009; Williams, 2004).

## Discussion

Counseling student-parents not only benefit from their program in the scholarly moment, but also professionally in the future. When explicitly trained to manage personal wellness and access support systems, counselors are better equipped to manage the stress of multiple roles that include parent and clinician (Chen & Slan-Jerusalem, 2009). Students are then taught how to successfully find resources or systems of support to be there for them when their own support networks are lacking (Frasch et al., 2007). Finally, as counseling students, and as parents, these individuals master the art of balancing school, work and family life. This skill is carried into the future, which can contribute to further student success (Springer et al., 2009).

Admitting student-parents into counselor training programs and retaining them also increases student (and ultimately workforce) diversity (Michel et al., 2013). When counseling programs seek and welcome students from a variety of backgrounds and roles, the program, students, and faculty benefit from diverse perspectives and values (Springer et al., 2009). When counseling programs exist as a mixture of students from all walks of life, clinical training and skills are enhanced and graduates are better prepared to meet the needs of diverse populations upon graduation.

## Future Research

It is imperative that more information is garnered about the impact of higher education on parents. Springer et al. (2009) suggested there is a need for collecting data that tracks student attrition rates and evaluates intervening variables, such as possible support for student-parents. There is also a need for “researchers...to examine both the perspective of faculty members on ways to respond to students personal issues and students’ views of which faculty behaviors are helpful” (Furr & Carroll, 2003, p. 489).

In addition, understanding the impact of graduate training on family relationships is essential. Sori et al. (1996) explained that graduate school can have a negative impact on student marriages and places couples at a higher risk for divorce. Transitional points in graduate training, such as entrance into a program and graduation can put students at even greater risk (Gilbert, 1982). Clearly, marital stress has a direct impact on child development and parenting (Houseknecht & Hango, 2006). As graduate programs facilitate change within students, there is also a responsibility to prepare and educate students about the

impact this could have on their interpersonal relationships.

More specifically related to counselor training programs, students are encouraged to attend to personal growth, development, and self-awareness (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003; CACREP, 2009). Students' family relationships play a large role in their personal discovery and awareness (Buelow & Bass, 1994). Similarly, marriage and family therapy students mentioned positive impacts of graduate training programs on their marriage as well as on their graduate studies (Sori et al., 1996). Personal relationships can have a direct impact on students' development as counselors and the quality of work done with clients (Furr & Carroll, 2003). Leonard (2002) suggested that gaining an understanding of students' interpersonal relationships will facilitate anticipation of their needs and enhance their preparation as counselors. Thus, having a rich description of the influence counselor training has on students' relationships with their children can lend itself to better university support for students and promotion of students' personal development.

## Conclusion

It is understood that even under the best of conditions, achieving success in higher education can be taxing. For student-parents, the responsibility associated with balancing not only a burgeoning career, but family concerns can make the journey a difficult one. When understanding the impact of higher education on students' relationships with their children, counselors, faculty, departments, and institutions can better attend to students' well beings while also attracting and retaining a diverse student body. This holistic attention to student wellness can decrease attrition and boost student productivity and commitment to quality of work (Matjasko & Feldman, 2006; Springer et al., 2009). With an increased enrollment of older, non-traditional students, institutions have a responsibility to provide an environment where success can be achieved and the educational experience can be positive (Kirby et al., 2004). The first logical step in meeting the needs of the growing student-parent population is to develop a keen awareness of their experiences. This article aims to make the unique needs, struggles, and contributions of graduate student-parents known. As the discourse regarding the needs of student-parents becomes broader, the academic community can respond with supportive structures that aid in the growth and development of students.

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# The Amended Child Protective Services Law: New Requirements for Professional Counselors as Mandated Reporters in Pennsylvania

Richard Joseph Behun, Eric W. Owens, and Julie A. Cerrito

Over the past several years, the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) in Pennsylvania has undergone an extensive evaluation, which added numerous amendments that went into effect on December 31, 2014 and have a direct impact on professional counselors in Pennsylvania as mandated reporters. This examination outlines the most significant changes in the CPSL that relate to mandated reporting with a specific focus on how those changes affect professional counselors across the Commonwealth.

*Keywords:* Mandated reporting; Pennsylvania; Child Protective Services Law; child abuse

Professional counselors in Pennsylvania have long been considered mandated reporters, and as such, have a legal and ethical responsibility to report instances of child abuse to the proper authorities. While these legal and ethical responsibilities are clear and unquestioned, the specific instances in which professional counselors must report abuse are often ambiguous. This ambiguity may be due to misunderstanding requirements of the legal statutes. Situations that require reporting almost always involve difficult circumstances that can challenge one's core beliefs about people and how the most vulnerable in society are treated.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognizes, in the Child Protective Services Act, (2015) that "abused children are in urgent need of an effective child protective service to prevent them from suffering further injury and impairment" (23 PA §6302). With this understanding, the Child Protective Services Act, also known as the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), was enacted by the Pennsylvania legislature "to encourage more complete reporting of suspected child abuse" (23 PA §6302). Like most laws, the CPSL has undergone a number of modifications over the years including the most recent amendments, which immediately followed the Jerry Sandusky scandal and came as a direct result of the recommendations in the Report of the Task Force on Child Protection (2012).

The Pennsylvania Task Force on Child Protection was created by the Pennsylvania General Assembly and charged with the undertaking to "thoroughly review state laws and procedures governing child protection and the reporting of child abuse" (Task Force on Child Protection, 2015, About the Task Force, para. 1) in Pennsylvania. The findings and recommendations of the Task Force are the foundation of the newest amendments to the CPSL, which became effective for all mandated reporters in the Commonwealth on December 31, 2014. The most recent amendments to the CPSL have attempted to further clarify the definition of child abuse and who is mandated to report such abuse. The purpose of this examination is to outline the most significant changes in the CPSL that relate to mandated reporting, with a specific focus on how those changes affect professional counselors across the Commonwealth. In order to exemplify the impact of those changes, clinical case examples are provided throughout the text to bridge the mandates of the law with true to life counselor-client scenarios that may be encountered in practice.

## Mandated Reporting

As defined by the CPSL, a mandated reporter is "a person who is required by this chapter to make a report

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## Mandated Reporting

of suspected child abuse” (23 PA § 6303). More specifically, the CPSL states that “the following adults shall make a report of suspected child abuse, subject to subsection (b), if the person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse” (23 PA § 6311).

Overall, the CPSL defines 16 types of persons who are required to make such reports. For example, social workers, psychologists, medical doctors, and all school employees are considered mandated reporters. Child care workers, policeman, attorneys, and clergymen are considered mandated reporters as well. Even volunteers who come into contact with children and who are responsible for a child’s welfare are considered mandated reporters. In the helping professions, mandated reporters include mental health counselors, rehabilitation counselors, licensed professional counselors, and professional school counselors. It is important to note that the term adult is used when discussing those who are considered to be a mandated reporter. In the amended CPSL, an individual 14 and older can be considered to be a perpetrator for committing an act of abuse; however, children under the age of 18 (except parents) cannot be considered a perpetrator for failing to act or failing to report child abuse.

### Reasonable Cause

Because mandated reporters are rarely a direct witness to child abuse, the decision to report suspected child abuse can become extremely complex. For the most part, the suspicion that child abuse has occurred can only be considered to a level or degree of certainty known as reasonable cause (see figure #1). Understanding reasonable cause is of great importance when it comes to mandated reporting laws in Pennsylvania, as it is the first requirement when



**FIGURE 1**

**Child Abuse Degree of Certainty Pyramid**

determining a basis to report (23 PA § 6311). According to Foreman and Bernet (2000), a state such as Pennsylvania, uses the term reasonable because it has specific legal meaning that holds mandated reporters to an objective standard. The reasonable cause standard for suspecting child abuse is meant to be a universal standard that is concerned with the reporter’s conduct (the decision to report suspected abuse) as opposed to state of mind (personal beliefs about whether abuse has occurred). Using reasonable cause as the standard for reporting suggests that all mandated reporters should make the same decision to report child abuse when presented with the same facts, regardless of one’s personal beliefs.

Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, reasonable cause will be defined as a rational suspicion that child abuse has occurred based on the mandated reporter’s training and experience and taken from specific facts. In the simplest terms, reasonable cause is having a degree of certainty greater than a “hunch.” It is suspecting that a child was abused, not necessarily believing that a child was abused. To test whether a mandated reporter is meeting this standard, one might ask the question: would a reasonable competent mandated reporter (an ideal model of conduct) make a report of suspected child abuse when confronted with a similar or like circumstance?

For example, in the case of *Vacchio v. St. Paul’s United Methodist Nursery School* (1995), a nursery school teacher noticed a child with a black eye and, with no other information, immediately contacted the New York State Central Registry on child abuse and maltreatment. The nursery school teacher had no further information regarding how the child received the injury, only the physical evidence that the child presented. Taking into consideration an ideal model of conduct, would a competent mandated reporter have made the same report when presented with a child with a black eye and no other information?

It was determined by the state, after an investigation with the parents, that the child was not a victim of abuse. In turn, the parents of the child brought civil suit against the teacher and the school stating that the teacher made a baseless report and that there were no facts to support physical abuse. The judge, in this case, ruled that making a report of child abuse without any supporting facts could be considered gross negligence. In this case, merely seeing a child with a black eye was not enough information for the teacher (a reasonable person) to make a rational inference that a child has been physically abused. It could be argued that the teacher could not even substantiate having a hunch that the child was physically abused. Thus, the conditions for reasonable cause were far from being met.

Given the above example, consider how

assessment of reasonable cause might change if the teacher knew the child's parents had been physically abusive in the past and then, one day, the child came to school with a black eye. There is still no evidence that the parents caused the child to have a black eye, but the mandated reporter would certainly be justified in having a hunch. It is important to note, however, that having a hunch is not quite fulfilling the requirement of reasonable cause. It is still possible that the child hit his eye playing catch with neighbors and the parents were not even aware of the injury. So what would give the teacher, in this case, reasonable cause to suspect the child was physically abused? Perhaps another student came before the teacher and disclosed that his peer received the black eye for not doing his homework. Or, maybe the child disclosed that his father told him that he is not allowed to talk about it. That would then give the mandated reporter reasonable cause to believe the child was abused.

Another example might include a school counselor working with a six-year-old girl who had been removed from her family at various intervals in the past year and had been placed in temporary foster care due to physical abuse by her biological parents. The child had recently returned to living with her biological parents and had visited the school counselor's office but was unwilling to sit down to talk. When the counselor addressed the reason for her not wanting to sit down, the child stated that she was told she could not talk about it and quickly changed the subject to a puppy that never sat because he loved to run around. The child's teacher later reported that the student appeared to be in pain when she attempted to sit down at her desk. In fact, the child avoided sitting whenever possible. In this example, the school counselor should report the child abuse even though the child did not expressively state that abuse occurred. The school counselor was able to make rational inferences that child abuse had occurred based on training and experience, as well as from specific facts (i.e., past history of physical abuse, exhibiting pain when sitting, and avoidance of discussion). If the school counselor had a reasonable cause that the child was abused, it should be reported.

Counselors do not need conclusive evidence or physical proof that abuse has occurred but simply need to have reasonable cause to suspect abuse as the grounds for filing a report. It has to be extremely clear to mandated reporters that there is not a need for concrete evidence of child abuse. The mandated reporter is not the person to determine whether or not child abuse has occurred; the mandated reporter is only responsible for having reasonable cause for suspicion that child abuse has occurred and, in turn, reporting information to the proper authorities.

## **Basis to Report**

The law requires that a mandated reporter has a legal obligation to report child abuse when he or she has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is the victim of abuse under any of the following four circumstances: (1) the mandated reporter had to come into contact with an abused child through his or her employment (2) the mandated reporter has to be responsible for the care of the child either directly or through a specific affiliation (23 PA § 6311). However, a significant addition in the CPSL came regarding instances when (3) a person makes a specific disclosure to a mandated reporter in that an identifiable child was the victim of abuse. A second significant addition on the basis to report is when (4) an individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to a mandated reporter that he or she was the individual who committed the act of child abuse (23 PA § 6311).

Section 6311 clarifies that the mandated reporter does not need to be able to identify the individual who committed the abuse nor does the child need to come before the mandated reporter. The mandated reporter does not need to speak with the child directly, nor even meet the child. If a third party discloses abuse to the mandated reporter, even if that abuse is committed by someone the mandated reporter cannot identify, a legal obligation exists to report the abuse. Furthermore, if an individual discloses that he or she is the person responsible for abusing a child, assuming the individual is 14 years of age or older, the mandated reporter is also legally obligated to report that disclosure.

For example, during a counseling session, a client states that she has been having a difficult time sleeping at night because she has a lot on her mind after she witnessed some "horrible" thing happen to her son's friend. As the topic is further explored, the client discloses that while she was on a late night jog last week, she witnessed a man physically assaulting a young child, whom she identified as her son's friend. The man was using a metal hanger to beat the child and the abuse took place in a detached garage of a house down the street. The client does not know the man's name or his relationship to the child, as the child lives only with his mother. She also has no knowledge of the man's name; however, the client does disclose the child's name and the address in which the abuse took place. In this case, even though the mandated reporter cannot identify the individual who has committed the abuse and has not met the child who was abused, the counselor has reason to believe the client's disclosure. Therefore, in this instance, a report must be made by the counselor under the CPSL.

It is important to acknowledge that the law previously required the mandated reporter only to report abuse when acting in the capacity of their employment or organized activity. The amended CPSL now requires reporters to disclose abuse in situations

## Mandated Reporting

outside of their employment. In short, mandated reporters are always required to report abuse about which they learn, regardless of whether or not the reporter is acting in the capacity of their employment, or if the child is under their care.

For example, a school counselor from Pittsburgh is attending her 11-year-old niece's soccer game on a Sunday morning in Philadelphia. While standing on the sideline, the school counselor is engaged with several parents who are talking about another 11-year-old, identified by her full name, on the opposing team's bench. The child is unable to participate in today's game due to an injury to her left leg that causes her to walk with a limp. One of the parents discloses to the school counselor that she saw the girl's father throw a rock at her in the same leg that is causing the limp, but was afraid to report this to the police. In this case, the disclosure is enough for one to reasonably suspect the father has caused physical abuse to the child. Furthermore, even though the school counselor is not acting in the capacity of her employment and the child is not under her care, the school counselor is mandated to report the abusive incident under the CPSL, given that the child is identifiable by name. This would not have been the case prior to the most recent amendments to the law.

### Staff Members of Institutions

Another significant change to the CPSL now requires the mandated reporter to personally make the report when working under the capacity of an institution (e.g. school, community agency, etc.). Prior to 2014, mandated reporters were only required to report child abuse to the person in charge of the institution for which they worked, such as a school principal, agency director, or designated agent. Once the person in charge of the institution was notified of suspected child abuse, that person in charge would then have assumed responsibility and had the legal obligation to make the report. The CPSL was amended to now require mandated reporters to directly report any child abuse to the Commonwealth, and then, only after the report has been filed, immediately report the abuse to the person in charge of the institution (23 PA § 6311). The person in charge of the institution is then legally required to cooperate with any subsequent investigation. In short, it is no longer legally permissible to report child abuse to one's supervisor with the assumption that the supervisor will pass the report to the proper authorities. The mandated reporter must make the report directly.

This change arose from the Jerry Sandusky scandal. During the Jerry Sandusky trial, Mike McQuery, a former Penn State assistant coach, testified that he saw Jerry Sandusky behind a boy in the shower

in 2001 and that he had reported what he believed to be a sexual act. This was reported to former head football coach Joe Paterno, former athletic director Gary Shultz, and former vice president Tim Curley. Prior to the amendments to the CPSL, McQuery would have satisfied his obligation as a mandated reporter by notifying Curley or Shultz, both administrators at Penn State, who in turn, would have been responsible for making the mandated report. Both Gary Shultz and Tim Curley were accused of failing to make the mandated report and the Commonwealth was never notified about the now convicted, Sandusky.

### Failure to Report

Failing to make a mandated report of child abuse has always been a criminal offense in Pennsylvania. However, the 2014 amendments to the CPSL have increased the penalties for willfully failing to report under the law (23 PA § 6319). When a mandated reporter willfully fails to report child abuse, it is a misdemeanor of the second degree, which is punishable by 1-2 years in prison. However, the offense rises to the level of a third degree felony, punishable by 3 ½ - 7 years in prison, if the following three conditions apply: the mandated reporter willfully fails to report, the child abuse that has occurred meets the criteria for a first degree felony or greater, and the mandated reporter has direct knowledge of the nature of the abuse. The penalty is increased for multiple offenses (23 PA § 6319).

### Immunity from liability

The fear of legal consequences for making a false allegation is a common one among mandated reporters, however, mandated reporters in Pennsylvania are protected from liability if they make the report in good faith (23 PA § 6318). It must be noted that the mandated reporter is presumed to have acted in good faith unless it can be proven otherwise (23 PA § 6318). For mandated reporters, the term good faith refers to the assumption that the reporter has reasonable cause to suspect that a child was subject to abuse and therefore filed the report (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). Still, mandated reporters must always use professional judgment before making reports of abuse. For example, in the previously discussed Vacchio case, the judge ruled that reporting a case of child abuse without having any factual information that abuse had actually occurred was negligent and that this type of negligent reporting behavior cannot be protected. In this case, it is possible that the child's black eye was obtained through another means (such as play or accident) rather than as a result of physical abuse.

## Reporting Procedures

Additional changes to the CPSL provide for electronic reporting of child abuse through the statewide ChildLine center (23 PA § 6313). Specifically, mandated reporters can now make reports through the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's Child Welfare Web Portal, located at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>. After creating an account, mandated reporters can use this online resource to report child abuse, as well as to apply for child abuse clearance certificates for employment and other purposes. The Department of Public Welfare website is available to mandated reporters, however, the law was also amended to encourage those who are not mandated to still report child abuse of which they are aware (23 PA § 6312). Child abuse reports can also be made through the ChildLine toll free hotline, 1-800-932-0313.

## Additional Measures

Several other measures were enacted by the Pennsylvania Legislature during 2014 that impact mandated reporters, and specifically professional counselors. For example, Act 31 requires licensed professional counselors to receive ongoing training and education on the CPSL and to be able to provide proof of being trained as mandated reporters of child abuse. Individuals applying for a new license must show proof of completion of three hours of mandated reporter training along with their application materials. Licensed professional counselors seeking renewals are required to have two hours of training every 24 months. Online training is currently available free of cost through multiple providers.

Act 33 expanded the requirement for obtaining criminal and child abuse background checks to a wider range of organizations, including colleges and universities across Pennsylvania. Act 34 increased whistleblower protections related to child abuse charges and mandated reporting. Act 45 requires child abuse and criminal background checks for volunteers and other individuals who work with children that were not previously required by law. Such individuals include unsupervised parents who volunteer to work with children in schools and other settings. Act 117 expanded the definition of a perpetrator of child abuse and further limits the contact convicted perpetrators may have with children. Act 118 specifically identifies the intentional false reporting of child abuse as a crime as well as increases criminal liability for obstructing a child abuse investigation or intimidating or coercing a witness to an allegation of child abuse.

Two legislative acts have very specific implications for professional school counselors across

Pennsylvania. Act 126 requires training for all school employees on mandated reporting requirements and procedures, including the aforementioned changes to the CPSL. Act 120, the Educator Discipline Act, expressly criminalizes sexual and romantic contact between school employees and students. Under Act 120, such sexual misconduct includes romantic and sexual relationships, regardless of the ages of parties involved. All complaints of sexual misconduct must be reported and investigated, and under the act, school districts are barred from entering into confidential agreements with those accused of wrongdoing. School officials are provided legal immunity for providing accurate references for employees terminated for sexual misconduct, and the adjudication of all complaints made under this law are to be publicly reported.

## Implications

These new amendments to the CPSL are intended to further strengthen the provisions and responsibilities for reporting suspected child abuse in Pennsylvania and have the potential to ultimately set a new standard of care nationwide. Specifically, these amendments have a direct impact on the way professional counselors in Pennsylvania address the legal and ethical ramifications of their duties as mandated reporters. There are several implications for Pennsylvania counselors related to reporting child abuse as a result of amendments to CPSL.

With greater responsibility to report suspected cases of abuse also comes trepidation related to over reporting of abuse. Specifically, concerns have been raised regarding the amount of time the county or regional child and youth agency personnel need to respond to suspected cases of child abuse and how they prioritize cases that need immediate attention. Due to the new law, there will undoubtedly be a significant spike in referrals causing strain on county or regional children and youth agency personnel to respond to and differentiate among cases in a timely manner. Furthermore, if extreme cases result in the necessity to remove children from their home environments, there will likely need to be a greater number of foster care families available across the Commonwealth.

If worry existed under the previous law that child abuse was being underreported, over reporting may be of equal concern now that the new law is in effect. The pendulum has potentially swung from failing to identify cases of child abuse in the past to the current state of classifying all potential cases as abuse, without question. Also, given that the reporter can no longer only be required to report to the person in charge of an institution, multiple reports may be made of the same incident of abuse. For example, if two teachers and a

## Mandated Reporting

counselor all become aware of one incident of abuse, by law, all three individuals must make individual reports. Rather than one report, state authorities will now need to consolidate multiple reports in to one single case, potentially slowing response times.

The CPSL protects mandated reporters who act in good faith, however, there is concern for professional counselors who receive reports from people who may have ill intentions and seek to make allegations of child abuse as acts of retaliation or to make another individual appear unfit. These cases may place counselors in precarious situations as to whether or not they should report. For example, a counselor receives a phone call from a child's father (a 3rd party disclosure) who states that the mother's live-in boyfriend is physically abusing his child. The counselor then receives a second phone call from the child's mother expressing concern that the father would call and make an unfounded report of abuse because he is jealous of the new man in her life and wants to cause problems for her. Under the new law, the counselor is not expected to investigate which parent is telling the truth and which is not. It is the counselor's obligation to make the report and allow county or regional children and youth agency personnel to investigate appropriately. Even though it might be tempting for the counselor to interview the child in seeking "the truth," the counselor must make the report regardless, given the information that was presented to the counselor.

Additionally, the new law requires volunteers who work with children in schools and in the community to obtain child abuse clearance certificates and undergo criminal background checks. These requirements have caused significant delays in the processing of such requests. This new provision also has implications for school counselors who may rely on volunteers, such as parents, grandparents, and community members, for various building-wide initiatives. Given large caseloads and their many responsibilities, school counselors often rely on volunteers to assist in various programmatic needs. From career fairs to kindergarten registration, the need for school volunteers is ever present. When these amendments to the CPSL went in to effect in 2015, all volunteers were required to pay for and obtain clearance certificates before they were allowed to help in schools. Act 15 of 2015 does provide some relief to volunteers by eliminating fees for some clearance certificates. Specifically, volunteers can obtain the child abuse history certification and the Pennsylvania criminal history certifications at no cost (Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, 2015). However, for volunteers who require federal background checks, there are still costs associated with those clearance certificates. Given the confusion around the multitude of legal changes, the costs, and the time associated with obtaining clearance certificates, there is a potential that

the pool of volunteers may decrease (Murphy, 2015). This places greater burdens on school counselors and others to fulfill the needs formerly met by volunteers.

An additional consideration with the new law is that race, ethnicity, and diversity, in general, are factors that are not discussed in terms of the impact they have on childrearing practices. The law does discuss religion and addresses parents who withhold medical treatment for their child due to religious beliefs. There are, however, various non-western indigenous healing practices that involve bodily harm and injury. If a counselor is aware of a child who presents with a physical injury that was knowingly obtained via a spiritual practice, the counselor may question if a report of abuse is warranted. For instance, a Hmong child comes to a counselor's office and the counselor notices several bruises on the child's body. The counselor is aware that the family engages in massage as a cultural practice, but this is the first time the counselor has noticed actual bruising. The counselor is aware of the changes to the new law and knows that a report must be made, but feels a sense of guilt over not acknowledging that culture has a large impact on the family's beliefs, values, and rituals. Therein lies the question of whether or not religious or spiritual factors should be taken into consideration when it comes to causes of injury to a child. The law does not discuss how to interpret religious and spiritual practices that may cause bodily harm to a child.

Although all school employees are mandated reporters, many disclosures of abuse are made to teachers, who are looked up to as trusted adults in the eyes of children. Teachers are also the individuals children come into contact with on a daily and regular basis. It is no surprise then that teachers are often the eyes and the ears for school counselors. Even though teachers are trained to make reports in the same way that school counselors are, teachers may believe they lack the counseling expertise to be able to exchange in meaningful dialogue with a child who has been abused. As a result, they may report the concern to the school counselor and then ask the school counselor to make the mandated report. However, under the law, the teacher must make the report. It would likely not be best practice to discuss the abuse with the child again, which poses the risk of over-questioning a child who is already distressed. Additionally, there are instances, particularly with physical abuse, in which a child may need medical attention from a school nurse, who once again, may be tempted to question the child further. It is important to recognize that some school personnel may lack the formal counseling and interviewing skills needed to respond to children's disclosures of abuse in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Keeping the focus on schools where many child abuse cases are reported, school district policies and

procedures are not always directly aligned with state laws (Kenny, 2004). In addition, many schools establish their own policies and procedures for making mandated reports of child abuse. In these cases, it is extremely important to note that state laws always supersede school policies. When state laws and school policies are incongruent with each other, it creates uncertainty of a professional's responsibility to make a report (Kenny, 2004). As a result, school personnel may become confused as to whether or not they should follow procedures for reporting child abuse according to school district policies or according to requirements of the new law.

## Conclusion

As described above, CPSL and the recent revisions have several implications for counselors who practice in a variety of settings including schools and communities. Many of the new policies serve to provide a greater degree of protection for children that previously did not exist. Thus, the ultimate purpose of this article is to highlight the requirements of the new law for counselors as mandated reporters. A secondary purpose is to illuminate some of the strengths and potential limitations pertaining to the reporting process that currently exist. It is the authors' hope that by discussing these considerations, counselors will become more informed practitioners with respect to reporting cases of child abuse.

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The *Journal of the Pennsylvania Counseling Association (JPCA)* is a professional, refereed journal dedicated to the study and development of the counseling profession. The Editor invites scholarly articles based on existing literature that address the interest, theory, research, and innovative programs and practices of professional counselors. Authors submitting manuscripts to the journal should not simultaneously submit them to another journal, nor should manuscripts have been published elsewhere in substantially similar form or with substantially similar content. All submissions are blind peer reviewed and authors should expect a decision regarding a manuscript within three months of acknowledgement of receipt. Following are guidelines for developing and submitting a manuscript. Any submissions that do not adhere to the following guidelines will be returned without review.

## Specific Requirements

1. Manuscripts should not exceed 25 pages, including references.
2. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced (including references and extensive quotations) with 1" margins on all sides.
3. **Title Page:** Identify the title page with a running head. The title page should include title (not more than 80 characters), author, affiliation, and an author's note with contact information. Author's note should be formatted exactly as it appears in this example:

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