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Counselor Educators' Perceptions of the Gatekeeping Process

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COUNSELOR EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS
OF THE GATEKEEPING PROCESS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Counselor Education Program

by

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M.S., Loyola University- New Orleans, 1997

May 2005

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated
to my father-in-law, Ken,
who didn't quite understand
this labor of love
but does now.

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I would like to begin by thanking the entire faculty at the University of New Orleans for giving me a chance and believing in me. I would like to offer my deepest appreciation to Dr. Terry Christensen who gave me the gift of “play” and supported me during my darkest moments. Thank you for all the times that you believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself. You have pushed me to be better in so many areas and I am truly grateful. I also want to acknowledge Dr. Barbara Herlihy who has been a source of inspiration for many years. Dr. Herlihy, who was my first professor during my master’s program, has remained a remarkable mentor throughout the years. Thank you for being a real person and someone I could count on.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process. To fulfill this purpose, a qualitative methodology using grounded theory procedures was utilized. Eight counselor educators participated in three rounds of individual interviews. These counselor educators were located in the south-east region of the United States and had five or more years of experience teaching in CACREP-accredited graduate programs.

Initial interviews occurred face-to-face and follow-up interviews were conducted via electronic mail. Initial face-to-face interviews were audio taped and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. Electronic mail interviews were printed for analysis purposes. For each round of individual interviews, coding procedures were utilized to identify emergent themes. Emergent themes were organized in four general categories: pre-admission screening phase, post-admission screening phase, remediation plan phase, and remediation outcome phase. Additionally, two interwoven themes emerged related to each gatekeeping phase: support and cultural sensitivity.

Verification procedures are discussed and methods to address potential limitations are presented. Implications for counselor educators, counselor education programs, related educational programs, CACREP, and ACA are highlighted. Finally, suggestions for further research are offered.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

After I completed my master's degree, I began looking for a school counseling position in the greater New Orleans area. I had great difficulty because I did not possess a teaching certificate and at that time, Louisiana law required that school counselors have a valid teaching certificate. For eight months, I worked tirelessly with a group of professionals to persuade the local school boards and the State Board of Education to waive this requirement. School systems that were considered "at need" were granted hiring privileges and began employing individuals without prior teaching experience as school counselors. I was then hired by New Orleans Public Schools and became one of the first school counselors in the state who did not possess teaching certification.

I began my professional journey excited and eager but encountered a great deal of resentment from some faculty members because they coveted and desired school counseling positions. The culture of the school system seemed to be that these positions were saved for teachers when they wanted to leave the classroom. I began working harder to promote school counseling and joined several professional organizations. I also began working under supervision toward state licensure and enrolled at the University of New Orleans as a doctoral student.

As a doctoral student, I enrolled in a clinical supervision class and became more familiar with supervision models, techniques, and ethical issues and legal cases pertaining to gatekeeping.

I began to feel a great commitment to providing quality supervision and a responsibility to the counseling profession and the community at large.

This detailed account of my personal experiences in counselor education and supervision is provided as the foundation that stimulated my interest in the proposed study. The following sections include a rationale for this study and a summary of relevant research regarding gatekeeping. A conceptual framework for this investigation is then offered. The research methodology is introduced. Finally, definitions of pertinent terms related to this study are provided.

Rationale for the Study

Professional standards and ethics codes require that counselor educators adhere to gatekeeping policies. The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is an affiliate organization of the American Counseling Association. This organization standardizes counselor education programs including program training and internship requirements. CACREP also presents standards that outline program development and student monitoring and retention. The “2001 Standards,” specifically Section II.F., state that “when evaluations indicate that a student is not appropriate for the program, counseling faculty should assist in facilitating the student’s transition out of the program, and if possible, into a more appropriate area of study” (CACREP, 2000). Furthermore, in the *ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (ACA, 1995) counselors are encouraged to be aware of the academic and personal limitations of students and supervisees, offer remedial assistance when needed, and to dismiss students who are unable to provide competent services (Section F.3.a.).

Despite these ethical and professional mandates, not all counselor education programs conduct annual evaluations of student performance in the programs (Bernard, 1975; Bradley & Post, 1991; Forrest, Elman, Gizara, & Vacha-Haase, 1999; Olkin & Gaughen, 1991; Vacha-Haase, 1995). Counselor educators may want to avoid confrontations with their students that will lead to unwanted legal challenges. Research pertaining to the gatekeeping process is limited. Studies that focus on the process of gatekeeping among counselor educators can provide the counseling profession with recommendations for supervision and teaching practices. Given that there is a lack of research on the process of gatekeeping and its accompanying ethical and legal challenges, exploratory research is needed. The following summary of relevant literature and the conceptual framework will provide a thorough rationale for proposed study and its chosen methodology.

Summary of Relevant Literature

To provide a foundation for the proposed research, relevant literature pertaining to gatekeeping was presented. This summary illustrates that inquiry-based research into the process of gatekeeping was imperative and may contribute to the current knowledge.

Gatekeeping

For most of the past century, the social work profession has viewed faculty members as gatekeepers. The profession has increased its emphasis on higher entrance standards and possible dismissal for incompetent students (Feldstein, 1972; Moore & Urwin, 1991). During the 1960s, counselor educators began exploring selection and retention standards for school counselors (Keppers, 1960; Sweeney, 1969). Bernard (1975) described possible due process procedures when dismissing unsuitable students and Iovacchini (1981) identified specific competencies and

characteristics that students should demonstrate before graduation. A decade later, gatekeeping procedures (Olkin & Gaughen, 1991) and gatekeeping models (Baldo, Softas-Nall, & Shaw, 1997; Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999) were introduced in the counselor education literature.

Oklin and Gaughen (1991) reported that programs surveyed had, on average, 3.3% problem students. Problem students were identified as having academic deficits, lack of clinical skills, interpersonal problems, and problems in supervision. They suggested a process for identifying and evaluating problem students that included: (a) formulating operational definitions of expected student behaviors; (b) possessing written policies and procedures that include information on evaluation and remediation and providing them to students upon entry into the program; and (c) routinely examining students on both academic and nonacademic criteria. They further recommended that programs allow for due process and dismiss students who are not evaluated as competent.

Frame and Stevens-Smith (1995) devised a gatekeeping model that included nine essential characteristics of ethical and competent students. These included being: (a) open; (b) flexible; (c) positive; (d) cooperative; (e) willing to use and accept feedback; (f) aware of impact on others; (g) able to deal with conflict; (h) able to accept personal responsibility; and (i) able to express feelings effectively and appropriately. They developed the Personal Characteristics Evaluation Form to evaluate students on these nine characteristics at mid-term and at the end of the semester. The evaluation form is included in the student handbook and on each course syllabus.

In response to Frame and Stevens-Smith (1995), Baldo et al. (1997) encouraged the use of a faculty review committee. They believed that a review committee can facilitate a process

through which faculty members may identify and report a particular student's progress without becoming the target of the student's reaction to a possible dismissal from the program. Their review and retention policy entails a more extensive and detailed due process for both the student and faculty that includes a consistent check on the student's progress.

Lumadue and Duffey (1999) incorporated the advantages of the two previous models and added an additional step by offering a behavior specific student evaluation instrument. The faculty at Southwest Texas State University devised the Professional Competencies and Performance Evaluation (Southwest Texas, 1996). This instrument is based on competencies stated in the *ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (ACA, 1995) rather than on subjective characteristics. The PCPE is included in the admissions packet so students are made aware of the instrument prior to being admitted into the program.

Student Impairment and Incompetence

Counselor educators began exploring gatekeeping models and procedures when the issues of student impairment and incompetence arose. Impairment is defined as situationally diminished functioning after reaching an adequate level, whereas incompetence is having never reached the baseline of skill development (Forrest et al., 1999). Such definitions are important not only for identification, but perhaps more importantly, for determining appropriate interventions (Forrest et al.).

Several disciplines, including counselor education and counseling psychology, have identified similar types of impairment among their students including academic and clinical deficiency, depression, emotional problems, ethical violations, fatigue, burnout, interpersonal problems, marital problems, personality disorders, physical illnesses, resistance to supervision, social problems, substance abuse, and unprofessional behaviors (Boxley, Drew, & Rangel, 1986;

Olkin & Gaughen, 1991; Vacha-Haase, 1995). Forrest et al. (1999) offered several recommendations to counselor educators that include: being able to differentiate among incompetent, unethical, and impaired student performance; correlating evaluation criteria with different types of impairment; and tracking the progress of identified students.

Legal and Ethical Issues

A review of the literature regarding the legal aspects of gatekeeping including evaluation, due process, remediation, and dismissal, indicates overwhelming support for educational institutions' decisions based on assessment and evaluation. In academic dismissal cases, the courts have demonstrated their belief that school faculty, as compared to judiciary entities, are better qualified to evaluate a student's performance (*Board of Curators of Univ. of Missouri v. Horowitz, 1976; Regents of Univ. of Michigan v. Ewing, 1985*). The courts consistently have confirmed their "reluctance to overturn professional decisions made by qualified faculty in specialization programs" (Knoff & Prout, 1985, p. 791).

When considering the merits of cases, the courts recognize and have an expectation that procedures are in place. Due process procedures assume that: (a) students are notified, in writing, of their impending failure prior to dismissal and they have opportunities to appeal the allegations (*Gaspar v. Bruton, 1975; Greenhill v. Bailey, 1975*), (b) faculty may require additional or remedial work as long as the work is related to the deficient area (*Shuffer v. Trustees of California State Universities and Colleges, 1977*), (c) interpersonal skills, personal hygiene, and attitudes are considered evaluative in academic terms (*Board of Curators of the University of Missouri v. Horowitz, 1978*), and (d) graduation may be delayed so that remediation can occur (*Board of Curators of the University of Missouri v. Horowitz.*)

When students who do not exhibit personal and professional competencies graduate and work in the field, the graduating university becomes vulnerable to lawsuits from employers and clients. A suit filed against Louisiana Tech University (Custer, 1994) argued that the university allowed a student to graduate without sufficient training and that the program had an obligation to the public to ensure the person graduating was competent in the area in which the degree is bestowed.

In the *ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (ACA, 1995), Section F details ethical standards for the training and supervision of student counselors. Counselor educators are to assist incompetent students in obtaining remedial assistance and pursue dismissal procedures when efforts have failed. The specific standard pertaining to this obligation states:

Counselors, through on-going evaluation and appraisal, are aware of the academic and personal limitations of students and supervisees that might impede performance. Counselors assist students and supervisees in securing remedial assistance when needed, and dismiss from the training program supervisees who are unable to provide competent services due to academic or personal limitations. Counselors seek professional consultation and document their decision to dismiss or refer students or supervisees for assistance. Counselors assure that students and supervisees have recourse to address decisions made to require them to seek assistance or to dismiss them (Standard F.3.a.,).

In summary, the gatekeeping responsibilities of counselor educators require them to be aware of students' inadequacies, facilitate due process when necessary, and assist students through remediation procedures.

Conceptual Framework

"A conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main ideas to be studied- the key factors, constructs, or variables- and the presumed relationships among them" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 18). In this study, the topic that was addressed included

counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process. Because counselor educators in master's-level programs are responsible for the teaching, supervising, and advising of students, their perspective was especially pertinent when researching the gatekeeping process. Counselor educators, as gatekeepers, have a legal, ethical, and programmatic responsibility to monitor and direct students who lack the appropriate skills of completing the benchmarks of a counseling program.

With the many accreditation, ethical, and legal mandates placed on counselor educators, it was vital that researchers began an exploratory and systematic examination of the gatekeeping process. Counselor educators' perspectives assisted me to organize a theoretical framework and to generate new ideas for the counseling community. The research questions for this study were designed to facilitate the exploration of counselor educators' perceptions of gatekeeping.

Research Questions

The primary question that was explored in this study was, "What are counselor educators' perceptions of the process of gatekeeping in master's-level graduate programs?" More specific questions for the initial individual interview included the following: (a) How would you define gatekeeping and its purpose? (b) What are your experiences in gatekeeping and how do you describe the process? (c) What does the gatekeeping process entail for you, your program, and the institution where you are employed? (d) What are your perceptions of the efficacy of gatekeeping? (e) What are your perceptions about how multiculturalism pertains to the gatekeeping process? Follow-up questions were further developed throughout the duration of data collection and analysis.

Overview of Methodology

Other than surveys on gatekeeping and descriptions of specific gatekeeping models and procedures, research on gatekeeping with counselor educators was lacking. Miles and Huberman (1994) indicated that discovery-based qualitative research can be conducted to provide more intimate detail about something that is already known or to gain a new perspective or a new way of viewing something. For the purposes of this study, the grounded theory method of qualitative methodology was utilized.

Grounded Theory

Because little is known about the process of gatekeeping, naturalistic inquiry was appropriate for this study. A specific technique within qualitative methodology is grounded theory. Grounded theory is defined as theory derived from the data that is likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). Grounded theory procedures are designed to gather information and build a theoretical explanation of a phenomenon or a process resulting from participants' perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These procedures were utilized to enhance counselor educators' understanding about the process of gatekeeping.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is quite complex. The researcher is responsible for identifying a meaningful topic, formulating appropriate research questions, and developing a thorough research plan. The researcher serves as the main instrument during data collection and analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). As the researcher, I offered a unique perspective of this research based on my experiences as a school counselor and supervisor. I utilized several strategies throughout data collection and analysis in order to bracket my own

biases and subjectivity. Furthermore, the research plan remained somewhat flexible as questions developed from the individual interviews.

Participant Selection

Criterion sampling was utilized to recruit participants for this research. Gay and Airisian (2000) described criterion sampling as selecting participants who have something specific in common and can provide rich examples of the phenomenon of interest. The criterion for participants in this study were counselor educators who teach in master's-level CACREP-accredited counseling graduate programs. I specifically chose counselor educators who teach in master's-level CACREP-accredited programs because of the academic developmental stage of the students enrolled. Students at this academic level are primarily learning basic counseling skills and techniques and are being shaped by the curriculum. CACREP-accredited master's programs were chosen to ensure comparability of programs as they must adhere to specific standards and practices. I selected eight participants who had three or more years experience as a counselor educator in the southeastern region of the United States. To provide information on the backgrounds of participants, participant profiles were generated based upon a demographics inventory [Appendix E] administered during the initial interview.

Data Collection

Individual interviews were the primary method of data collection for this study. Other sources of data collection included personal observations and document reviews. Those who were selected and consented to participate in this study were asked to volunteer for a 60-90 minute initial interview and two follow-up interviews. Initial interviews occurred face to face and the follow-up interviews were conducted by electronic mail. I kept a journal throughout the duration of data collection and data analysis and recorded any observations and thoughts as they

occurred. In keeping with the spirit of triangulation, I collected pertinent documents that provided additional sources of information such as student handbooks, course syllabi, and website information. These documents confirmed participants' responses. Additionally, participants consistently verified and confirmed the emerging theoretical conceptualizations and model through electronic mail.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted throughout the duration of the study. Data analysis involves organizing what has been seen, heard, and read so that sense can be made from what has been learned (Glesne, 1999). Miles and Huberman (1994) identified three phases for analyzing and interpreting data. These phases include: (a) data reduction, (b) data display, and (c) conclusion drawing and verification.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998a), data reduction involves a set of coding procedures identified as open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding involved separating, identifying, labeling, and categorizing data into relevant themes. During axial coding, the organization of data entailed linking and grouping concepts according to the conditions that surround them. In the final stage of coding, selective coding involved the organization of categories around a dominant or redundant theme.

A data display can visually assist the researcher in analyzing and drawing conclusions based on a more thorough understanding. These data displays allow the researcher to connect categories, properties, and dimensions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data display techniques included matrices, graphs, charts, figures, networks, and tables.

Finally, conclusion drawing involves the researcher deciding what things mean by noting any regularities, patterns, explanations, configurations, causal flows, and propositions (Miles &

Huberman, 1994). As the researcher, it was important that I remain open and flexible to alternative outcomes that may occur. Verification procedures entailed utilizing multiple data collection procedures, maintaining a reflexive journal, consulting on a weekly basis with a peer debriefer, and validating the data through member checks.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were derived from a combination of resources including counseling literature as well as my own personal experiences. These terms are defined according to their use in the proposed study.

Gatekeeping

A process whereby a counselor education program intervenes when students are not equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills, and values for professional practice.

Gatekeepers

The decision makers regarding who is competent to enter the profession and who is not. They must be prepared to move students, even well-meaning students, out of the program if they are incompetent to enter the profession (Moore & Urwin, 1991).

Incompetent

Students who have never reached the baseline of skill development and do not possess the ability to function adequately in their environment (Forrest, et al., 1999; Gladding, 2001).

Impairment

Students who have situationally diminished functioning after reaching an adequate level, academically and/or personally (Forrest et al., 1999).

Evaluation

The process of collecting, analyzing, and judging data in order to make a decision (Gladding, 2001).

Supervision

Interventions provided by clinical supervisors to trainees in the counseling profession to enhance professional functioning of the trainees, to monitor the quality of professional services offered to the clients they serve, and to serve as gatekeepers for trainees who enter the counseling profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998).

Competence

Knowledge and ample relevant experience about a specific counseling subject (Rinas & Clyne-Jackson, 1988).

Due Process

A student's right to receive notice and be given the opportunity for a hearing prior to being remediated.

Remediation

Acts of a counselor education program to assist impaired and/or incompetent students.

Remediation may include having students enroll in additional courses, complete an additional internship, receive personal counseling, take an academic leave, or withdraw from the program.

Multicultural Competence

Counselor educators' awareness, knowledge, and skills to intervene successfully in the lives of students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Lee & Richardson, 1991).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a rationale for this research, present relevant literature pertaining to gatekeeping, introduce the conceptual framework, and explain the chosen methodology. Because research pertaining to the process of gatekeeping was limited, naturalistic inquiry was necessary. Therefore, this study involved qualitative methodology in order to explore counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter includes a review of relevant literature and provides a framework for the completed study. The chapter begins with an overview of the history of gatekeeping. Counselor impairment, multicultural sensitivity, and existential/humanistic counseling theories are discussed. Next, accreditation standards and counselor educators' supervision role are reviewed. The final section includes specific gatekeeping models and a discussion of evaluation regarding these models.

History of Gatekeeping

Beginning with the turn of the century, the helping professions were led by social work which was the first profession to emphasize entrance standards into the vocation. Since the late 1950s, social work literature consistently has reiterated the role of social work faculty as the collective conscience for the profession and has affirmed the need for faculty to screen those who will enter the profession (Moore & Urwin, 1991). At the Allenberry Colloquium in 1971, social work educators were deemed responsible for guarding the exit gate of the profession. Feldstein (1972) summarized the minutes from the colloquium:

Undergraduate educators are the gatekeepers. They must decide who is competent to enter the profession of social work and who is not. Having advised the student before admission, having worked with the student through the program, educators have to be prepared to move the student, even the well-meaning student, out of the program if he or she is not competent to enter the profession. (p. 65)

Moore and Urwin (1991) described the emphasis on gatekeeping procedures that increased in the mid-1970s and suggested several historical trends of this development. Social work enrollments decreased in the 1970s and schools began accepting students who ordinarily would have been rejected, to sustain enrollments and maintain existence at their university. At this time, social work accreditation standards recognized the influence of student selection and retention and highlighted the importance of professional practice. In the 1980s, general educational programs experienced increased enrollment but the social work field was suffering service cutbacks and lack of funding. As a result, student values and attitudes became an evaluation measure. Moore and Urwin contended that if changes in student enrollment reflect economic opportunity rather than a commitment to a profession, this will have an impact on potential clients and gatekeeping becomes of greater importance and concern.

During the 1960s, counselor educators began exploring selection and retention standards for school counselors (Keppers, 1960; Sweeney, 1969). Bernard (1975) described due process procedures in dismissing unsuitable students; specifically, providing students with written program manuals upon admittance. Iovacchini (1981) examined the impact of academic due process decisions in counselor education and provided competencies and characteristics that students should be able to demonstrate. A decade later, gatekeeping procedures (Olkin & Gaughen, 1991) and gatekeeping models (Baldo et al. 1997; Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999) were introduced in the counselor education literature.

Student Impairment and Incompetence

Oftentimes, counselor educators began exploring gatekeeping models and procedures when the issues of student impairment and incompetence arose. Although there is not a

definition endorsed by the American Counseling Association (ACA) or CACREP (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs), student impairment and counselor impairment can harm clients and the reputation of the counseling profession.

Sheffield (1998) offered a concise definition that includes different types and causes of counselor impairment. He defined counselor impairment as “a condition that compromises and reduces the quality of counseling received by clients that may be due to a physical or mental condition or stress associated with situational factors” (p. 97). Emerson and Markos (1996) believed that a precise definition is not as necessary as the awareness of potential harm that may result from impaired counselors’ behaviors. Client welfare is vital, as is maintaining the profession’s integrity.

Impairment is defined as situationally diminished functioning after reaching an adequate level, whereas incompetence is having never reached the baseline of skill development (Forrest et al., 1999). Such definitions are important not only for identification, but perhaps more importantly, for determining appropriate interventions (Forrest et al.). Several disciplines, including counselor education and counseling psychology, have identified similar types of impairment among their students, including academic and clinical deficiency, depression, emotional problems, ethical violations, fatigue, burnout, interpersonal problems, marital problems, personality disorders, physical illnesses, resistance to supervision, social problems, substance abuse, and unprofessional behaviors (Boxley et al., 1986; Olkin & Gaughen, 1991; Vacha-Haase, 1995). Many programs reported utilizing specific categories of professional competence when evaluating students including academic skills, assessment skills, clinical judgment, clinical skills, ethics, interpersonal skills, openness to supervision, and theoretical skills (Biaggio, Gasparikova-Krasnec, & Bauer, 1983; Olkin & Gaughen).

Counselor educators may have difficulty identifying inadequate performance or impairment because they need to consider two areas of judgment, objective and subjective. Bradley and Post (1991) stated that identification of students with impairments is much more difficult than identifying those with academic deficiencies. This may be because faculty members can use objective data when making academic evaluations, but clinical judgments are seen as more perceptual and subjective (Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995). Faculty members also may struggle between their nurturing and evaluative roles, especially if a student serves as an advisee, supervisee, or graduate assistant. Counselor educators may find themselves in these dual relationships with their students and find it difficult to distinguish among their roles. Finally, counselor educators may want to avoid possible litigious experiences resulting from addressing incompetent or impaired student behaviors.

Forrest et al. (1999) offered recommendations in order to clarify and further define impairment and incompetence and develop appropriate evaluation measures. First, counselor educators need to be able to differentiate among incompetent, unethical, and impaired student performance to increase the possibilities for more accurate assessments, appropriate remediation plans, and effective documentation. Second, evaluation criteria and corresponding types of impairment should be stated simultaneously and be discussed and agreed upon among all faculty members. Finally, students need to be tracked once they have been identified and their progress must be a factor in considering whether they continue in an educational program.

Multicultural Sensitivity

It is imperative to identify, understand, and conceptualize student impairment and incompetence within a multicultural perspective. The influences of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and disability need to be further explored in relation to evaluating

impairment and incompetence. Forrest et al. (1999) expressed their surprise to find “very little written about the effects of race, gender, and other demographic variables on the identification and conceptualization of student impairment” (p. 670). Diversity is seen as a complicating issue when assessing impairment and ethnicity differences are viewed as a hindrance to effectively dealing with an impaired trainee or student (Gizara, 1997; Vacha-Haase, 1995).

Forrest et al. (1999) speculated about the potential influences of multicultural issues in regards to understanding impairment. First, trainee behaviors that are questionable may overlap with their cultural experiences, gender socialization, or religious beliefs, and these experiences are not easily reversible. Therefore, trainees will be more open to acknowledging their limitations if cultural sensitivity is inherent in the identification of inadequacies and in the development of remediation plans. Second, there are certain stresses associated with diversity issues for both the trainer and the trainee. Accordingly, it is necessary that literature on multicultural competencies be reviewed and used in gaining insight into and understanding of impairment.

The Relationship in Counseling

Counselor educators began considering gatekeeping procedures in response to encountering impaired or incompetent students. When a student counselor may be impaired or incompetent, it is important to remember that the quality of the counseling services may also be diminished. When conducting a session, the counselor offers a loan of the self to the client, which is often a very personal and intimate constant communication between the two. “I know that there is something about the counselor as a person that makes a tremendous difference in the way things progress” (Kottler, 1997, p. 90).

Humanistic/existential counseling theories, and person-centered counseling in particular, view the relationship as the catalyst that leads to constructive personal change. Because the quality of the relationship is key, the human qualities of the counselor are integral. Rogers (1961) believed that the counselor's personality is just as important as the knowledge and skills possessed. Counselors communicate through a process of genuine dialogue with their clients. "The kind of person a therapist is, or the ways of being that he or she models, is the most critical factor affecting the client and promoting change" (Corey, 1996, p. 5).

The counselor's personal self, when facilitating the relationship, is an integral component in person-centered counseling. Seligman (2001) contended that counselors must possess self-awareness, have the ability to be fully present, and use themselves as an instrument of change. Through the power of the relationship, counselors can promote self-esteem and empowerment by demonstrating the core conditions of active listening, empathy, caring and acceptance, genuineness, and congruence. When these conditions are present in the counseling relationship, the client is able to move along the path of self-actualization and become a more fully functioning person. "I have read about the certain attitudes like acceptance and unconditional positive regard. There is something about the personal power of the helper that motivates, inspires, soothes, and supports the client" (Kottler, 1997, p. 90)

Many counselors begin the counseling relationship by using person-centered tenets. The emphasis on the relationship has influenced other counseling theories as well. Seligman (2001) found that person-centered counseling, because of its humanistic and phenomenological emphasis, reflects great appreciation for individuality and diversity and has been incorporated into many other treatment approaches. The person-centered counseling paradigm, as well as other humanistic approaches, illuminates the importance of the counselors' self in counseling. It

is through the quality of the relationship that the client will eventually gain independence and insight; therefore, it is imperative that the counseling relationship remain healthy and effective.

Accreditation Standards

To ensure that the highest standards have been met by the faculty and students, counseling programs often seek national accreditation. Counseling programs that are accredited by CACREP (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs) must abide by certain standards in order to maintain their accreditation. Possessing CACREP accreditation involves institutional and professional support for quality training. CACREP's "2001 Standards" define accreditation as: "a system for recognizing educational institutions and professional programs affiliated with those institutions for a level of quality performance and integrity based on review against a specific set of published criteria or standards" (CACREP, 2000).

CACREP also presents standards that outline program development, organizational management, and student monitoring and retention. The "2001 Standards," specifically Section II.F., state that "when evaluations indicate that a student is not appropriate for the program, counseling faculty should assist in facilitating the student's transition out of the program, and if possible, into a more appropriate area of study" (CACREP, 2000). This standard is consistent with established institutional due process and the *ACA Ethical Standards*.

Gaubatz and Vera (2002) surveyed CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited programs and found that CACREP schools reported lower rates of both student deficiency and student remediation. Faculty in non-accredited programs screened students less and reported higher rates of student deficiency. However, both accredited and non-accredited programs

reported struggling with gatekeeping procedures and the consequences they face when gatekeeping.

Ethical Considerations

In the *ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (ACA, 1995), Section F details ethical standards for the training and supervision of student counselors. Herlihy and Corey (1996) stated that students should be made aware of what will be expected of them both academically and personally before they enroll in a counseling graduate program. According to the Code of Ethics, Standard F.2.a., counselor educators are to orient the prospective student and include information such as type and level of skill acquisition, subject matter, basis for evaluation, training components, supervision settings and site requirements, policies and procedures pertaining to evaluation and dismissal, and employment prospects. Informed consent is an ethical as well as a legal matter. Graduate students have the right to be properly informed of admissions and gradation requirements before they enter a program.

Herlihy and Corey (1996) stated that there will be times when counselor educators are made aware of students' lack of performance in academic and personal areas. Remley and Herlihy (2005) noted that it is possible for a student to possess strong intellectual ability but not the personal characteristics to be an effective counselor. Counselor educators are to assist incompetent students in obtaining remedial assistance and pursue dismissal procedures when efforts have failed. The specific standard in the ACA Code of Ethics (1995) pertaining to this obligation states:

Counselors, through on-going evaluation and appraisal, are aware of the academic and personal limitations of students and supervisees that might impede performance. Counselors assist students and supervisees in securing remedial assistance when needed, and dismiss from the training program supervisees who are unable to provide competent

services due to academic or personal limitations. Counselors seek professional consultation and document their decision to dismiss or refer students or supervisees for assistance. Counselors assure that students and supervisees have recourse to address decisions made to require them to seek assistance or to dismiss them (Standard F.3.a.)

Counselor educators are asked not to endorse students for certification, licensure, employment, or completion of an academic program if they believe students are not qualified for the endorsement (F.1.h). “A counselor educator who had strong reservations about a student’s ability to provide effective counseling services, and who allowed that student to progress through and graduate from the program, would be doing a disservice both to the student’s future clients and to the counseling profession” (Remley & Herlihy, 2005, p. 295). Counselor educators are asked to follow these ethical guidelines when working with graduate students and to also utilize evaluation measures to ensure consistency.

Legal Issues

A review of the literature regarding the legal aspects of gatekeeping including evaluation, due process, remediation, and dismissal, indicates overwhelming support for educational institutions’ decisions based on assessment and evaluation. In academic dismissal cases, the courts have demonstrated their belief that school faculty, as compared to judiciary entities, are better qualified to evaluate a student’s performance (*Board of Curators of Univ. of Missouri v. Horowitz, 1976; Regents of Univ. of Michigan v. Ewing, 1985*). The courts consistently have confirmed their “reluctance to overturn professional decisions made by qualified faculty in specialization programs” (Knoff & Prout, 1985, p. 791).

According to court decisions, the definition of academic performance includes demonstrated knowledge, technical and interpersonal skills, attitudes, and professional character. The inclusion of the latter three areas within the academic arena provides a rationale when

evaluating, remediating, and dismissing students who are lacking certain criteria (Knoff & Prout, 1985; Olkin & Gaughen, 1991).

The legal challenges arising from academic dismissals have been based on the concept of constitutional due process, which includes procedural due process and substantive due process. Kerl, Garcia, McCullough, and Maxwell (2002) defined procedural due process as a person's right to receive notice and an opportunity for a hearing prior to being deprived of a liberty or property interest. Substantive due process involves the protection of such liberty or property right from interference of an acting agent such as a university professor. The courts view registration and enrollment in an academic program as a protected property interest and have determined that a dismissed student has a protected interest in continuing his or her education (Kerl et al.). Because due process is recognized and supported in the courts, it is apparent that it is a necessary component in a gatekeeping model.

An examination of counselor education litigation reveals only cases of possible harassment (*Mandsager v. Univ. of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2003*) and discrimination (*Ivan v. Kent State University, 1994*). Due to the absence of case law involving dismissals from counselor education programs, case law from medical schools will be reviewed because both possess similar evaluation methods. "School authorities are uniquely qualified by training and experience to judge the qualifications of a student, and efficiency of instruction depends in no small degree on the school's faculty's freedom of interference from other noneducational tribunals (*Connelly v. University of Vermont, 1965*). Olkin and Gaughen (1991) stated that medical schools parallel training in clinical programs because both specializations utilize academic and performance-based evaluations. These cases provide legal precedent for future litigation matters regarding questionable remediation or dismissal procedures.

The courts have long recognized specific issues that surround due process. Due process requires that students are notified, in writing, of their impending failure prior to dismissal and that they have opportunities to appeal the allegations (*Gaspar v. Bruton*, 1975; *Greenhill v. Bailey*, 1975). Faculty may require additional or remedial work as long as the work is related to the deficient area, such as enrolling in another semester of practicum or a specific course (*Shuffer v. Trustees of California State Universities and Colleges*, 1977). Interpersonal skills, personal hygiene, and attitudes can be included in evaluations in academic terms as long as the institutional decisions are reasonable in nature (*Board of Curators of the University of Missouri v. Horowitz*, 1978). Finally, it is acceptable that graduation may be delayed so that remediation can occur (*Board of Curators of the University of Missouri v. Horowitz*.)

When students who do not exhibit personal and professional competencies graduate and work in the field, the graduating university becomes vulnerable to lawsuits from employers and clients. A suit filed against Louisiana Tech University (Custer, 1994) argued that the university allowed a student to graduate without sufficient training and that the program had an obligation to the public to ensure the person graduating was competent in the area in which the degree was bestowed.

Supervision

“Supervisors, like counselor educators, serve as gatekeepers to the profession” (Remley & Herlihy, 2005, p. 313). One of the functions of the supervisor is to serve as gatekeeper for the profession (Lumadue & Duffey, 1999). Supervisors are asked to abide by certain legal and ethical mandates when conducting clinical supervision. Oftentimes, counselor educators are responsible for the clinical supervision of master's level interns. Graduate programs also have a

role in gatekeeping (Lumadue & Duffey). When they are conducting supervision in a group setting or on an individual basis, counselor educators may find themselves in a university supervisory role. Bernard and Goodyear (1998) offered the most extensive definition of supervision to date. They believe supervision is:

An intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more 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 more junior person(s), monitoring the quality of professional services offered to client(s) she, he, or they see(s), and serving as a gatekeeper of those who are to enter the particular profession. (p.6)

Beginning students are immersing themselves in new knowledge and skill acquisition. Ronnestad and Skevholt (1993) noticed a large gulf between theory and practice experienced by beginning students. While students are learning new theoretical and conceptual information, they are being evaluated in a practicum or clinical setting. They also found that students at this stage need an effective supervisor who will assume the role of teacher and structure and direct the training.

The three most important goals in clinical supervision, according to research, include teaching the supervisee, safeguarding the welfare of the client, and monitoring supervisee performance for licensing boards and professional associations (Haynes, Corey, & Moulton, 2003). Supervisees are expected to learn through supervision how to effectively counsel clients. This, in turn, will promote positive supervisee growth and development and also ensure the welfare of current clients. Supervisors also serve as gatekeepers for the profession. "Supervision has a pivotal role in the evaluation of competence of the supervisee to practice within the profession" (Corey et al., p. 7).

University supervisors must monitor the competency of student counselors to ensure positive relations with clients, internship sites, and the community at large. Supervisees' personal

characteristics and behaviors are just as important as their academic acumen. “In addition to evaluating a supervisee’s academic ability, knowledge, and clinical skills, it is essential to identify and evaluate a supervisee’s personal characteristics, interpersonal behaviors, and professional behaviors that are likely to influence their ability to effectively deliver mental health services” (Corey, Haynes, & Moulton, 2003). Remley and Herlihy (2005) advised that supervisors must address student incompetence to maintain the counseling programs’ reputation in the community and the profession itself. Essentially, the supervisor acts to protect future consumers of counseling services (Remley & Herlihy).

Supervisees should receive ongoing feedback regarding their performance. This feedback should be consistent and provide the supervisee with alternative recommendations. In cases when supervisees are demonstrating incompetence, remedial plans should be offered. Due process is pivotal in having all parties heard. Corey, Haynes and Moulton (2003) recommended several types of remediation including increased supervision, a leave of absence, counseling, additional coursework, repeating a practicum or internship, or joining a personal growth group. Only after remediation interventions have failed should a student be considered for dismissal from the program.

Gatekeeping Models

The majority of research regarding gatekeeping focuses on the gatekeeping policies and/or models of universities. Oklin and Gaughen (1991) surveyed master’s-level graduate programs in hopes of gathering specific information on the policies and procedures that are used when evaluating and dismissing students. Problem students were identified as having academic deficits, lack of clinical skills, interpersonal problems, and problems in supervision. The graduate

programs surveyed reported that 3.3%, on average, were problem students and this finding was consistent with similar studies over a decade ago (Boxley et al. 1986; Tedesco, 1982). However, a recent study revealed that faculty members reported that approximately 10.4% of their master's-level students were poorly or marginally suited for the counseling field (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002).

Based on their findings, Olkin and Gaughen (1991) suggested a process in which the identification and evaluation of problem students would include: (a) formulating operational definitions of expected student behaviors; (b) possessing written policies and procedures that include information on evaluation and remediation and providing them to students upon entry into the program; and (c) routinely examining students on both academic and nonacademic criteria. They further recommended that programs allow for due process and dismiss students who are not evaluated as competent.

Frame and Stevens-Smith (1995) presented a gatekeeping model for counselor education programs to enhance the monitoring and dismissal processes of impaired counselors and to reduce any possible harm to clients. The faculty were asked to develop a policy statement that described the personal characteristics of ethical and competent professional counselors. These nine essential characteristics include being: (a) open; (b) flexible; (c) positive; (d) cooperative; (e) willing to use and accept feedback; (f) aware of impact on others; (g) able to deal with conflict; (h) able to accept personal responsibility; and (i) able to express feelings effectively and appropriately. Lumadue and Duffey (1999) supported this gatekeeping model by stating, "this process has contributed greatly to the profession's awareness of the need for a gatekeeping process that guarantees due process for both faculty and students" (p. 105).

After identifying nine essential characteristics of counselors, the Personal Characteristics Evaluation Form was created (Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995). This instrument uses a 5-point Likert-scale instrument to evaluate students at each mid-term and at the end of each semester on the nine essential characteristics; a rating of 3 or above is considered a minimum standard of behavior. The policy statement and evaluation form were included in the student handbook and a summary was provided on each course syllabus. Students were asked to sign an agreement that they had read the handbook and would abide by the policies and procedures of the department. When a student receives more than one evaluation form detailing the inadequacies, the student is asked to meet with their advisor to discuss remediation which may include personal therapy, behavioral change, or additional field experiences. If a student receives more than three evaluation forms in one semester, the student is asked to meet with a committee to discuss reconsidering continuation in the counseling program.

Baldo et al. (1997), while commending Frame and Stevens-Smith's efforts toward establishing a monitoring and dismissal process, provided an alternative gatekeeping model that encouraged the use of a faculty review committee, in conjunction with the entire counseling faculty. They believe a review committee facilitates a process in which faculty members may identify and report a particular student's progress without becoming the target of the student's reaction to a possible dismissal from the program. Their review and retention policy entails a more extensive and detailed due process for both the student and faculty. Baldo et al. have contended that there are several advantages to their model: (a) due process is evident throughout the implementation cycle; (b) the student and retention committee members are continually informed of the identified problem areas and the remediation plan; (c) the student receives a remediation plan, both orally and in written form, and is asked to sign upon receipt; and (d) the

student has an opportunity to present his or her case to the faculty. These policies and procedures have been used successfully in two separate cases when students' clinical skills and interpersonal interactions were questionable.

Lumadue and Duffey (1999) incorporated the advantages of the two previous models, but added an additional step by offering a behaviorally specific student evaluation instrument. The faculty at Southwest Texas State University devised the Professional Competencies and Performance Evaluation (PCPE; Southwest Texas, 1996). This instrument is endorsed by the Texas Association for Counselor Education and Supervisors (TACES) and is based on competencies stated in the *ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (ACA, 1995).

Lumadue and Duffey (1999) stated that there are two additional advantages of their instrument. First, students are notified of the gatekeeping procedures during the admissions process via a letter included in the admissions packet informing them that they will be evaluated based on their professional and personal competencies throughout the program using the PCPE. Second, the competencies listed on the PCPE are outlined in the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* and are specific behaviors rather than subjective characteristics. By using these specific competencies, awareness and consistency are increased among faculty members and students. By utilizing the PCPE very early in students' academic careers, fewer students reach the end of the program disappointed and upset and in need of remediation or dismissal.

Kerl et al. (2002) stressed that the PCPE establishes and provides an effective means to enforce higher standards of personal and professional conduct throughout the duration of a student's academic career. They further stated that faculty members should include professional evaluation criteria in all syllabi and emphasize that meeting professional standards is as important as passing traditional grading standards. Clear behavioral definitions of personal and

professional attitudes and clinical behaviors need to be included as a part of academic performance (Kerl et al.)

Kerl et al. (2002) summarized the PCPE as a proven and effective gatekeeping model which offers students systematic feedback regarding their professional competencies, is beneficial in documenting and reinforcing dismissal procedures, and is useful in designing and assessing remediation progress. Furthermore, they contended that as national accreditation agencies continue to move toward an emphasis on assessing learning outcomes, it becomes more important to integrate professional competency evaluation measures such as the PCPE into a holistic counselor education program.

Evaluation

For gatekeeping models to be helpful to counselor educators when identifying and conceptualizing impaired or incompetent students, it is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of such procedures. Forrest et al. (1999) raised concerns about the design and effectiveness of assessment. “No one has written about the type, quality, length, and focus of the assessment process to determine cause or explanation for trainee inadequate performance (Forrest et al., p. 668).

Lumadue and Duffey (1999), who developed the PCPE (Professional Competencies and Performance Evaluation), stated that additional research is needed to address the empirical effectiveness of the PCPE. Additionally, the inter-rater reliability among faculty, and between faculty and site supervisors should be assessed to assure consistency when utilizing the PCPE.

Frame and Stevens-Smith (1995) contended that “as counselor education programs begin to further develop monitoring and dismissal processes, it will be necessary to evaluate their

effectiveness” (p. 126). They recommended that these evaluations be accomplished through the use of student and faculty questionnaires and assessments conducted by site supervisors.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the relevant literature surrounding gatekeeping and related issues. A history of gatekeeping was presented including the emergence of gatekeeping in counselor education. The definitions of student impairment and student incompetence were provided as well as types of impairments students may possess. Impairment was presented within a multicultural perspective and recommendations were offered to ensure consistent measures for the identification and development of remedial plans.

In addition, specific counseling theories that emphasize the importance of the personhood of the counselor were discussed. A review of CACREP accreditation standards and ethical standards that pertain to gatekeeping was presented. Specific legal and ethical mandates of informed consent and due process were highlighted. Legal cases that involved admissions, remediation, and dismissal procedures were reviewed. The university supervisor’s role as gatekeeper was discussed and recommendations were offered. Finally, counselor education gatekeeping models were described and the need for the evaluation of these models was stressed. With the increase of legal and ethical demands placed on counselor educators and the lack of empirical attention to this phenomenon, this study proved to be vital to the exploration of counselor educators’ gatekeeping practices.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Although several gatekeeping models of counseling graduate programs have been published over the last decade (Baldo, Softas-Nall, & Shaw, 1997; Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995; Kerl et al., 2002; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999; Olkin & Gaughen, 1991), few researchers have focused on counselor educators' perceptions of the process of gatekeeping. Furthermore, researchers have failed to utilize a process-oriented exploration when studying the remediation needs or dismissal of counseling graduate students. Our society is becoming more litigious in nature due to increased attention on individual rights. It is imperative that researchers begin an exploratory and systematic inquiry into the gatekeeping practices of counselor educators.

Because qualitative methodology is exploratory in nature and process-oriented, it was an ideal choice for this study. A form of qualitative inquiry, grounded theory, was utilized so that theoretical conceptualizations could be formed to assist counselor educators in their gatekeeping practices. This chapter includes a discussion of the qualitative methods that was used in this study, research questions that were applied, data collection and analysis procedures, and a summary of verification methods that were utilized to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings.

Rationale for Using Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative inquiry may be utilized when discussing a particular occurrence or explaining participants' perspectives related to their beliefs, behaviors, or practices. Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined qualitative research as

Any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations. (p. 10-11)

Miles and Huberman (1994) indicated that qualitative research is conducted to: (a) confirm previous research on a topic; (b) provide more intimate detail about a topic that is already known; (c) gain a new perspective or a new way of knowing something; and (d) expand an existing study's scope. Qualitative researchers are more interested in process and meaning as opposed to outcome and products (Creswell, 1994). Qualitative inquiry works especially well when the methodology of choice is complimentary to the researcher's style and preferences and when exploring areas in which there are many unknowns.

Merchant (1997) stated that qualitative methodology can be especially useful when conducting research in the field of counseling because both counselors and qualitative researchers: (a) are taught early on to be aware of their beliefs, biases, prejudices, and values; (b) possess skills such as active listening, attending, paying close attention to non-verbals and body language and using probing questions; (c) have a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty; (d) focus on process and content and utilize observations, interpretations, and reflections; and (e) set high goals to empower and advance those with whom they work.

Lumadue and Duffey (1999) suggested a need for further study regarding faculty concerns about assuming the role of gatekeeper and possible resistance to the process. They believed that further research in this area could assist programs to address faculty issues about gatekeeping, and thus facilitate the development, incorporation, and implementation of consistent and effective gatekeeping policies and procedures. Forrest et al. (1999) noted that qualitative methods for studying impairment issues offer great appeal given the limited number

of cases available to study. They further stated that grounded theory would be useful in developing and generating theory on impairment issues.

Because of the limited amount of research related to the perceptions of counselor educators and the process of gatekeeping, qualitative methodology was an appropriate choice for this exploratory and discovery-based study. A form of qualitative inquiry, grounded theory, was employed so that a conceptual framework of the gatekeeping process for counselor educators could be developed, expanded, and eventually utilized.

Grounded Theory

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), grounded theory was developed by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, who saw a need to develop theory from the exploration of human interaction and behavior in social contexts. Based on the convictions that human behavior is complex and varying, individuals act on the significance of the meaning they attach to circumstances, and individuals actively respond to problematic circumstances, a foundation was laid for the development of theory grounded in information from social experiences. Therefore, grounded theory provides a framework that is derived from the data and is likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action. Grounded theory procedures are designed to collect information and to construct a theoretical explanation of a phenomenon or a process as a result of investigating participants' experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Themes and theoretical constructs eventually emerge and provide an understanding of the phenomenon at hand. Because I was interested in learning more about the process of gatekeeping as experienced by counselor educators, grounded theory procedures seemed most appropriate.

Research Question

Due to the limited research on counselor educators' experiences with gatekeeping, an exploration and investigation regarding this phenomenon added to the current knowledge. First, it was necessary to develop a researchable question. The purpose of this question was to clarify what the researcher wanted to know about the phenomenon at hand (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Because I was interested in counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process, this study explored the question, "What are counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process in CACREP-accredited master's-level graduate programs?" More specific questions included the following: (a) How would you define gatekeeping and its purpose? (b) What are your experiences with gatekeeping and how do you describe the process? (c) What does the gatekeeping process entail for you, your program, and institution where you are employed? (d) What are your perceptions of the efficacy of gatekeeping? (e) What are your perceptions about how multiculturalism pertains to the gatekeeping process?

Role of the Researcher

A researcher's role in qualitative methodology is quite complex. Patton (2002) noted that, in qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument and the credibility of the findings hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork. The researcher must identify a meaningful topic, formulate appropriate research questions, and develop a comprehensive research plan. Because a human being serves as the instrument in qualitative research, self-awareness can be an asset both in data collection and data analysis because it is the researcher who makes observations, takes field notes, asks interview questions,

and interprets responses. Therefore, by practicing self-awareness, the researcher is “sharpening the instrument” (Patton).

Creswell (1994) stated that researchers should clearly state their biases, values, and judgments at the beginning of an investigation and throughout the entire process. An integral part of conducting qualitative research is stating any assumptions and biases about the topic being researched. As the researcher, I responded to this challenge and stated my assumptions and biases up front. I also utilized various methods to bracket my biases and subjectivity and analyze my findings critically.

Researcher Assumptions and Biases

My primary assumption underlying this research endeavor was that counselor education programs, specifically master’s-level programs, have a duty to safeguard the counseling profession and to assist students who are academically or personally incompetent to practice counseling. Because master’s CACREP-accredited programs offer many introductory counseling courses, as well as a 100 hour practicum and a 600 hour internship, I believed that counselor educators in these programs would be familiar with the academic and personal acumen of the students. I also believed that this is an opportunity when counseling graduate students can receive remedial assistance such as taking additional courses or completing an additional internship before they enter the workforce in order to be better prepared and competent to practice counseling.

When I began my undergraduate career as a Sociology major, I enrolled in a class for credit in which I volunteered at a site for a semester. I chose to work in a Guidance and Counseling office at a local high school where I shadowed the counselors and received a taste of what a school counseling position entailed. From that point on, I knew that I truly would enjoy

working as a school counselor and looked into enrolling in counseling graduate programs. I chose a graduate program in another state, earned a master's degree in Guidance and Counseling, and completed a practicum and two internships at a public high school. Once I graduated and began applying to local school systems, I encountered difficulties because I did not possess a teaching certificate. After working tirelessly on having my application accepted and processed, I finally received a school counseling position later that year and began my journey as a professional in the counseling field.

My first year entailed developing my professional identity as a school counselor and implementing a comprehensive guidance program. I also encountered resentment from some faculty members. I learned that counseling positions were favored and sought after by seasoned teachers. Some teachers expressed their frustrations when they learned that I did not possess teaching certification. Many teachers communicated that when they get tired from teaching in the classroom, they would like to work as a school counselor. At this point, I noticed that I became protective of the school counseling field because I witnessed some who wanted to be counselors for the wrong reasons and others who were qualified but blocked because of outdated rules and standards. Because of this experience, I worked harder to promote a comprehensive school counseling plan and I became involved in several professional organizations. I also began receiving clinical supervision to become licensed by the state and I enrolled in a supervision course at a local university.

During this supervision course I learned of theories, models, and techniques for clinical supervision and of the many issues supervisors face. I studied and processed ethical and legal dilemmas and my instructor discussed a law suit in which she was involved because she was essentially “gatekeeping” the counseling profession. One assignment included researching a law

suit that pertained to counselor education and supervision. I came across a case involving a university that was being sued because a graduate was accused of being incompetent in the field by promoting a dual relationship with her client. The dual relationship consisted of the client offering babysitting and catering services and borrowing money. The client sought damages from the counselor, the counselor's clinical supervisor, and the university. This case often reminds me how imperative gatekeeping practice is. Based on my early experiences as a school counselor and on the knowledge gained from taking an introductory supervision course, I believe that master's-level counseling graduate programs are responsible for the total educational experience of their students and have a responsibility to safeguard the community and to positively promote the counseling field.

Bracketing Researcher Biases

A balance must be achieved between subjectivity and objectivity when conducting qualitative research. "Objectivity enables the researcher to have confidence that his or her findings are a reasonable, impartial representation of a problem under investigation, whereas sensitivity enables creativity and the discovery of new theory from data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 53).

Subjectivity plays a hand at the onset, when a researcher decides on a topic to study, through data analysis when it contributes to the research. Glesne (1999) remarked that if a researcher can utilize his/her emotions then these emotions will help identify when one's subjectivity is engaged. Glesne suggested that, instead of suppressing one's emotions, researchers can use them to inquire about accurate findings and interpretations and to re-work additional questions. As a researcher, I utilized strategies to detect and contain subjectivity and

maintained a consistent awareness of my personal assumptions and biases that could skew the data. I stated my assumptions and biases up front and used member checks, peer debriefing, and reflective journaling.

Member Checks

Participants were provided an opportunity to review their transcripts and to clarify any misinterpretations of their perceptions and experiences. Member checks involve sharing transcripts, analytical thoughts, and interpretations with the participants to ensure their ideas were recorded and represented accurately (Glesne, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Maxwell (1996) maintained that member checks are the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpretation of the meaning of what participants say and the perspective which they have on the phenomenon being studied. Member checks were utilized in each subsequent follow-up interview.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing allows the data to be believable and credible and adds to the confirmability of the interpretations and findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A peer debriefer was responsible for reviewing my progress, including data collection and analyses, on a regular basis and also served as a tool to ensure the trustworthiness and dependability of the research.

Reflective Journal

A detailed, reflective journal was also kept throughout the duration of this study and was shared with my peer debriefer. All ideas, thoughts, feelings, experiences, decisions, and reactions as they pertained to my research study were recorded in the reflective journal.

Patton (2002) contended that grounded theory has opened the door to qualitative inquiry because of its overt emphasis on the importance of generating theory and its specific procedures

for theory development. In addition, grounded theory unabashedly admonishes the researcher to strive for objectivity. Objectivity involves facilitating openness to what the participants have to say and being willing to lend an unbiased voice to participants so they can describe their experiences, as accurately as possible, in their own words.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) offered suggestions for maintaining objectivity in a study that include: (a) search for comparisons within the data but also in similar phenomena found in the literature, as this will stimulate the researcher's thinking and increase recognition and understanding of the data; (b) use individual interviews, observations, and document reviews to gather and compare complex, diverse, and multiple data sources; and (c) keep track of assumptions and biases by processing findings and interpretations with participants during data collection and analysis.

Research Plan

Grounded theory procedures were utilized to investigate counselor educators' perceptions on the process of gatekeeping. Before I began, I proposed this investigation to my dissertation committee and submitted a formal protocol to the Human Subjects Committee of the University of New Orleans [Appendix A]. Once approval from both entities was granted, I began the investigation by choosing potential research participants.

Purposeful Sampling

Qualitative researchers tend to select each of their cases purposefully, as the logic lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Glesne, 1998). I chose a sample based on the knowledge or experience of individuals. I utilized

criterion sampling so that all participants met a certain set of standards. Gay and Airasian (2000) describe criterion sampling as choosing participants who meet specific characteristics and will provide rich examples of the phenomenon of interest.

Participant Selection

The criterion for participants in this study included counselor educators who teach in master's-level CACREP-accredited counseling graduate programs. Based on this criterion, I selected eight participants who had three or more years experience as counselor educators. For the purposes of this study, the participant pool was limited by a geographical boundary that includes counselor educators in the southeast region of the United States. A demographics inventory was administered during the initial interview so that a participant profile was included in this study [Appendix E]. Participants were recruited by letters sent via electronic mail [Appendix B]. Follow-up telephone calls were utilized for those who do not initially respond. I discussed all possible risks involved in this study and explained that a signed consent form detailing the study would be sent out to confirm participants' willingness to become involved [Appendix C]. I also addressed any additional questions or concerns at this time.

Gaining Entry

Those who conduct qualitative research are responsible for gaining entry into the environment in which they will study (Creswell, 1994). Once I identified participants and they consented to become involved in this investigation, I gained entry by scheduling an initial face-to-face individual interview. At this initial interview, I presented and reviewed the consent form and demographics survey and addressed any additional questions or concerns including the limits of confidentiality. I then asked the participants to sign the consent form indicating that they understood their rights regarding their participation in this study.

Measures to Ensure Participant Confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality generally are foremost concerns when conducting research. Participants have the right to expect confidentiality and anonymity when they consent to participate in research (Glesne, 1998). Several safeguards were made to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. First, participants' identities were disguised through the use of pseudonyms. Second, observation notes, audiotapes, transcripts, and signed consent forms were kept in a secured location. The audiotapes were transcribed by the researcher. The researcher deleted all identifying information and once the transcripts had been edited for accuracy, the audio tapes were destroyed.

All paperwork including transcripts, observation notes, and consent forms will be stored for a period of seven years in a secure, confidential file. My peer debriefer and dissertation committee co-chairs will have access to this file. Finally, all identifiable information including transcripts, consent forms, and data will be destroyed after the seven year period has elapsed. As the study progressed and after data collection procedures and analysis had been completed, participants were given information on how they can obtain the results of the study.

Data Collection Procedures

If used in conjunction, data collection procedures work to relate themes and concepts. All data procedures have one key element in common: their analysis depends primarily on the integrative and interpretive skills of the researcher (Gay & Airisian, 2000). Triangulation is a process of collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings by using a variety of methods. This strategy reduces the risk of chance associations or systematic biases, and allows for a better examination of the explanations that the researcher develops (Maxwell, 1996). For this study, data collection procedures included: (a) individual participant interviews,

(b) personal observations, and (c) document reviews. This study was designed with a focus group in mind. However, participants expressed concerns over logistics and anonymity. Therefore, participants were given ample time to review, verify, and confirm the model that emerged.

Individual Interviews

Many qualitative researchers would not view the interview as a process of retrieving information but rather as a joint construction of meaning between the researcher and participant (Gay & Airisian, 2000). In order to gain information about participants' perspectives, in-depth individual interviews served as the primary method of data collection for this investigation. I conducted one round of face-to-face individual interviews that lasted 60-90 minutes and, I requested two follow-up interviews via electronic mail. Initial face-to-face interviews were audio taped and transcribed by the researcher for the purpose of data analysis. Interviews conducted by electronic mail were printed for analysis purposes.

Initial Interview Questions

Initial interview questions are stated in broad and general terms and allow for an introductory phase. Follow-up questions usually become better defined and narrower as the data reveal emerging themes and concepts. The questions below were included in the interview guide [Appendix D] for the initial interview. To address counselor educators' perceptions of gatekeeping, I asked the following question: (a) How do you define gatekeeping and its purpose? To learn more about counselor educators' experiences with gatekeeping, I asked: (b) What are your experiences with gatekeeping and how do you describe the process? Additionally, to learn more about the advising and administrative roles of counselor educators, I asked: (c) What does the gatekeeping process entail for you, your program, and institution where you are employed? To explore their perceptions of whether or not the gatekeeping process is effective, I asked: (d)

What are your perceptions of the efficacy of gatekeeping? Finally, to determine counselor educators' perceptions of the impact of multiculturalism on gatekeeping I asked: (e) What are your perceptions about how multiculturalism pertains to the gatekeeping process?

Once all initial interviews were completed, they were transcribed and analyzed by the researcher. In order to narrow research questions and to draw new themes or concepts, the transcripts were analyzed between each round of interviews. By utilizing follow-up interview procedures, opportunities to confirm and explore new themes and to ask additional questions were abundant.

Personal Observations

Another form of data collection involves the researcher's personal observations. Most qualitative research is "naturalistic, encompassing holistic inquiry about participants' understanding of their natural setting or environment" (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 212). Live observations of participants during the individual interviews and the focus group interview were utilized. Maxwell (1996) contended that rich data are the product of detailed, descriptive note-taking about the specific, concrete events the researcher observes. I kept a detailed reflective journal of my observations and included my thoughts, feelings, and impressions that occurred during each individual interview.

Document Reviews

Documents that pertain to the topic at hand can corroborate a researcher's observations and interviews, allow findings to be more trustworthy, shape new directions for follow-up interviews, and provide a researcher with historical, demographic, and personal information that is otherwise unavailable (Glesne, 1999). Used in conjunction with other data collection procedures, document reviews can also provide an additional source of information. Vitae,

student handbooks, program and college policies, mission statements, and other pertinent documents for each participant were explored and used as tools in developing follow-up interview questions and confirming participants' responses.

Focus Group Interview

Focus groups are homogeneous in nature, consist of 6 to 10 people with similar backgrounds, generate a variety of perspectives, and increase confidence in whatever patterns emerge (Patton, 2002). Due to logistics and anonymity, participants were unable to partake in a focus group. After the first and second rounds of interviews, the categories became saturated and a model emerged. After each round, participants were asked to reflect on the model and to respond with their reactions as well as any new ideas or information. Participants consistently verified and confirmed the model and clearly stated that the model reflects their experiences.

Data Analysis

Creswell (1998) contended that data analysis is a “zigzag” process in which a researcher gathers and analyzes data simultaneously. Qualitative researchers try to understand participants' perspectives by entering their world and facilitating discussions to answer their research questions. Data analysis involves organizing what has been seen, heard, and read so that sense can be made from what has been learned (Glesne, 1999). A researcher must create categories, synthesize the information, search for patterns, and interpret the findings. This process is continued until themes become redundant and the descriptions are rich and detailed. Miles and Huberman (1994) identified three phases for analyzing and interpreting data: (a) data reduction, (b) data display, and, (c) conclusion drawing and verification.

Data Reduction

Miles and Huberman (1994) described data reduction as the “process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcripts” (p. 10). Data reduction is occurring continuously throughout any qualitative endeavor. Data reduction is an important part of analysis and involves analytic choices by the researcher. According to Strauss and Corbin (1988), data reduction involves a set of coding procedures identified as open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Coding Procedures

According to Strauss and Corbin (1988), grounded theory is theory derived directly from participants’ perspectives. I applied identified coding procedures in order to organize and reduce the data into particular categories. These categories became integral components when describing counselor educators’ perceptions and experiences in gatekeeping. Miles and Huberman (1994) maintained that coding is the phase of analysis when a researcher differentiates and combines the data that have been retrieved and subsequently reflects on this information. A researcher utilizes coding procedures to organize and reduce the data.

Open Coding

Open coding involves the reading and rereading of transcribed data to facilitate theme development (Strauss & Corbin, 1988). Identified themes are then organized into categories. These categories are next developed according to their properties and dimensions. According to Strauss and Corbin, a property is a characteristic of a category that reflects the themes first identified. Once categories and properties have been identified, the dimensions will illuminate the range of variability in participant responses. Dimensions will give specification to a category and variation to the framework. In summary, open coding involves separating, identifying,

labeling, and categorizing data into relevant themes (Strauss & Corbin). Preliminary categories, including properties and categories, were identified. After open coding is completed, the researcher then uses axial coding.

Axial Coding

Axial coding includes the organization of the data which entails grouping concepts according to the conditions that surround them, properties from which they evolved, action strategies that are present in the category, and consequences of the strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1988). Axial coding systematically identifies the interrelatedness of components within categories and allows the researcher to assemble the data differently. To properly conduct axial coding, I developed a diagram of each category including its properties and dimensions. This diagram provided me with a visual representation of each category from which to develop statements based on the interrelatedness of the components within each category. Diagrams and data displays will be discussed later in this chapter. Once axial coding had been accomplished, I applied selective coding procedures.

Selective Coding

Selective coding facilitates the process of integrating and refining categories in order to provide a clearer explanation and description of dominant and redundant themes across the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1988). Selective coding involves the purposeful selection of data that implicates a broad application to the collective experiences of the participants and provides a central explanatory concept that serves as an explanation of all information. The central category “consists of all the products of analysis condensed into a few words that seem to explain what the research is all about” (Strauss & Corbin, p. 146). Once a theoretical explanation emerges, the theory will be refined by trimming off redundant constructs and filling in poorly developed

categories (Strauss & Corbin). Additional rounds of interviews were utilized to achieve these tasks.

Data Display

Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that “a data display is an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action” (p. 11). A display can visually assist the researcher in analyzing and drawing conclusions based on a more thorough understanding. These data displays allow the researcher to connect categories, properties, and dimensions and include data procedural techniques such as matrices, graphs, charts, networks, and tables (Miles & Huberman). Data displays were used throughout the duration of the study in order to see the data connections and to draw conclusions.

Conclusion Drawing

The final action in data reduction is conclusion drawing. From the beginning of data reduction, the researcher decides the significance of the data by noting any regularities, patterns, explanations, configurations, causal flows, and propositions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Over the course of analysis, the researcher is to remain open and flexible to other outcomes that may occur. In hopes that the data will prove redundant and rich in description, themes were consistently explored and verified throughout data analysis.

Verification Procedures

Quantitative research relies on reliability and validity measures; however, qualitative research aspires to achieve “trustworthiness” during evaluation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed four criteria to ascertain trustworthiness of research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is presenting the results in a believable format and concluding that the findings make sense. In order to assess the credibility of findings, the researcher can explore the following questions: (a) Do the conclusions of this research make sense? (b) Do the conclusions adequately describe research participants? and (c) Do the conclusions authentically represent the phenomena of interest? (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve credibility, multiple data collection procedures were utilized such as individual interviews, personal observations, and document reviews. These data collection techniques also included triangulation procedures such as member checks, which enhanced the credibility of the research findings.

Transferability seeks to determine whether the results of the current study relate to other contexts and can therefore be transferred to other settings and other populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The results will gain added support if they are connected to theoretical frameworks beyond the immediate study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By including information from the participant profiles, researchers can decide if the results are transferable to other contexts or settings. Also, the reflective journal will facilitate detailed descriptions of the research process and will allow other researchers to understand the progress the data analysis and eventual conclusions.

Dependability proves whether or not the results of the research are consistent over time and across researchers and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In considering dependability, a peer debriefer was utilized to review the analysis and to compare conclusions. Replication of this study will also be possible because of the detailed account of the methodology and specific events that occurred in each step of this investigation.

Confirmability involves concluding that the findings are reflective of the participants' perspectives rather than the researcher's biases and assumptions. The conclusions should depend

on the subjects and conditions of the inquiry, rather than on the inquirer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A reflective journal was used to record any thoughts, feelings, ideas, perceptions, predictions, and hypotheses about the topic or findings that occur from field experiences or individual reflections. Miles and Huberman (1994) contended that researchers should look for rival hypotheses which may include alternative explanations for findings during the duration of data collection and analysis. Therefore, each hypothesis was included in the reflective journal and discussed with my peer debriefer.

Summary

This chapter presented a qualitative research agenda designed to explore the process of gatekeeping for counselor educators in master's-level CACREP-accredited counseling programs. A rationale for utilizing qualitative methodology was explored and grounded theory procedures were described as the most appropriate choice for the purposes of this investigation. The role of the researcher and a detailed research plan, including methods of data collection and analysis, were discussed. Finally, verification procedures and methods to enhance trustworthiness of findings were presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents findings that emerged from participants' responses to the grand research question: What are counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process? Results presented in this chapter reflect my interpretations of data collected in the form of: (a) three rounds of individual interviews, (b) personal observations, (c) journal reflections, (d) document reviews, and (e) personal knowledge and experience about the process of gatekeeping.

This chapter is organized into five main sections. The first section includes an introduction of the participants who shared their perceptions about the gatekeeping process and contributed to this research. The second section consists of data analysis and reduction procedures for the first round of interviews including initial interview questions, themes that emerged from analysis of participants' responses, and a summary of the data. The third section includes data analysis and reduction procedures for the second round of interviews which were conducted via electronic mail. Data analysis and reduction procedures for the third round of interviews, also conducted via electronic mail, are described in the fourth section of this chapter. Finally, the fifth section provides a theoretical explanation of how counselor educators in master's-level counseling programs perceive the gatekeeping process, and verification procedures that were utilized to validate the theoretical framework.

Participant Profiles

Participant profiles were designed to provide a detailed description of each person who volunteered for this study. The pool from which participants were selected was limited to counselor educators who taught in CACREP-accredited master's-level counseling programs in the southeast region of the United States. Because the population from which participants were recruited is specific and the identities could be easily identified by the readers of this study, participant profiles were stated in general terms in an attempt to preserve anonymity.

These profiles were created from information provided by the participants on the demographic information form that was provided at the initial interview, from document reviews, and from personal observations recorded in the researcher's journal. Participants were given pseudonyms and their university affiliations were kept confidential to maintain anonymity. Additionally, ethnicity was omitted in the individual profiles to ensure participant anonymity. A group profile is first presented to provide a summary of demographic information, followed by a more detailed description of each participant's individual profile.

Group Profile

General demographic information was compiled from all participants in order to create a visual representation of the participants [Table 1] who assisted in this investigation. There were a total of eight participants: five were female and three were male. Six of the participants were Caucasian, one was African-American, and one was Asian. All eight participants held doctoral degrees in counselor education. Each participant was employed as a full-time faculty member at a CACREP-accredited

master's-level counseling program in the southeast region of the United States.

Participants' experience as counselor educators ranged from 3-14 years and their years of experience as counselors ranged from 6-20 years. The participants listed a wide range of specialty areas that included: school counseling, marriage and family counseling, career counseling, community counseling, substance abuse counseling, group counseling, child and adolescent counseling, supervision, play therapy, and legal and ethical issues. Each semester, all participants indicated that they provide clinical supervision in both individual and group formats to between 5-13 master's students. Additionally, participants academically advised between 5-30 students.

Individual Profiles

This section presents individual profiles for each of the eight participants as a means to introduce each participant and provide a visual image associated with each person. Each individual profile contains a description of the initial interview and the participant's characteristics related to his or her position as a counselor educator.

Participant # 1: Helen

Helen and I met at a professional conference for our first interview. We met the first morning of the conference and introduced ourselves at the registration table. Helen was dressed professionally in a sleeveless dress with a sweater around her shoulders. Helen asked me if she could eat breakfast while we talked and I agreed. She was very excited to participate in my study and stated that she has an interest in my topic. We made our way to the cafeteria and Helen purchased her breakfast while I found a table and began to arrange the tape recorder and interview materials.

Table 1
Group Participant Profile

Participant	Pseudonym	Gender	Degree & Field	Years of experience as counselor educator	Years of experience as counselor	Specialty areas	Number of supervisees and format (per semester)	Number of academic advisees (per semester)
1	Helen	Female	Ph.D./ Counselor Education	3	6	School, Legal & Ethical	5-10/ both	30
2	Stacy	Female	Ph.D./ Counselor Education	14	15	School	5/ both	15
3	Nedra	Female	Ph.D./ Counselor Education	5	8	Family, Career & Supervision	4-13/ both	5
4	Nate	Male	Ph.D./ Counselor Education	3	8	Community, Family & Supervision	5/ both	25
5	Vicki	Female	Ph.D./ Counselor Education	6	20	Community, Career & Substance Abuse	10/ both	10
6	Wendy	Female	Ed.D/ Counselor Education	9	20	School	6/ both	15
7	Alan	Male	Ph.D./ Counselor Education	4	15	Community & Children	7/ both	22-25
8	Fred	Male	Ph.D Counselor Education	7	10	Group, Children, & Supervision	10/ both	15

Helen returned to the table with a breakfast. I discussed with her the taping procedures and began. I noticed that Helen seemed to perk up as though she was being interviewed on television and her mannerisms became exaggerated. The cafeteria was somewhat loud and I often strained to hear her. After we began talking, Helen pushed her breakfast aside and drank her coffee. At times, she would look around the room or at who was walking by our table. Helen was pleasant to talk with and voiced her interest in the results of this research.

Participant # 2: Stacy

I was looking at the job announcements posted at the same professional conference when I heard Stacy asking a group of people if any of them were me. I approached Stacy, introduced myself, and asked her how her presentation had gone. She said that it had gone quite well. Stacy was dressed in a suit and carried a briefcase. I asked Stacy where she would like to conduct the interview and she mentioned that she would like another cup of coffee so the cafeteria would be ideal.

As we approached the cafeteria, Stacy motioned for me to get a table as she got into the line for her coffee. While I was setting up for the interview, Stacy asked questions about me, my background, and why I had decided to interview her. At first she seemed rushed, but seemed to relax as we continued to talk. She had just published a book on school counseling so we spoke at length about the field and our experiences. She discussed her concern for “quality school counselors” and stated that her program needs to better define its gatekeeping procedures. During the interview, Stacy took her time and reflected on her answers. We talked casually quite a bit after the interview and she mentioned that her program may have an opening in two years; I told her that I was

looking for a position within the next year. I offered her my vita and she took it. Stacy seems very happy in her present position. During the interview, she discussed her unhappiness at two previous jobs and how she feels like she's "on her honeymoon right now."

Participant # 3: Nedra

I also met Nedra at the professional conference and waited for her near our meeting spot. Nedra was rather petite and dressed casually in a blouse and skirt. She spoke very fast and her hands were shaking. It felt awkward to be with her. I wanted to lessen her anxiety so I asked her if she would like to sit inside or outside for the interview. She indicated that she would like to sit outside to "warm up." We sat under a gazebo and I began to set up for the interview.

Nedra's nervousness made it very difficult for me to concentrate. When I asked her the initial interview questions, she was worried that she "might be saying too much." She offered recommendations on the topic of gatekeeping but seemed concerned with "protecting the image" of her university. When our interview concluded, I thanked her for her time. She left the table while I was packing up the interview materials. Later, I ran into Nedra and one of her colleagues in the lobby of the conference center. Nedra stated that she had consulted with this faculty member about the content of the interview and that they were both concerned that she "may have said too much" and wanted me to "remove a section" from her transcript. The other faculty member stated that the "image of the university might be harmed." Both were very polite but obviously distressed about the situation. I reaffirmed to both faculty members that participant names and university affiliations would not be included in the transcripts or data analysis reports. I also

explained how I would use codes and pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Participant # 4: Nate

I met Nate the next morning at the registration table. I had seen Nate the evening before at a reception and had introduced myself, so we were familiar with each other. He was very polite and cordial. He walked around an area to make sure that the “sound would be okay” on the audiotape. We decided to sit outside at a cement table in a courtyard. It was bright and breezy. The university band was practicing nearby and it was audible. Nate was dressed casually in jeans and was articulate. When he read the consent form, he was worried about having to complete three rounds of interviews. I explained the process again and allowed him to decide whether he could still make the commitment. He decided that the topic was important enough and would “find the time.”

Nate was very insightful about the topic of gatekeeping, specifically with respect to multiculturalism and efficacy. He often discussed his counseling experiences when he lived in his native country and how it is different for him now that he lives in the United States. I noticed that when he discussed experiences from his native country, his accent became more pronounced and he seemed more relaxed. At the conclusion of our interview, Nate thanked me for interviewing him and mentioned that his university may have a job opening in the next year. I then thanked him for participating in my dissertation and told him that I would apply for the position once it was announced.

Participant # 5: Vicki

I met Vicki soon after my interview with Nate. I met Vicki in the lobby of the conference center. She was wearing a red dress and seemed very relaxed. We decided to sit outside for the interview, under a gazebo. She was very accommodating and polite.

Vicki had a very soft voice and I often struggled to hear her. I had to move the recorder closer to her a few times. She often reflected on the answers to my questions and we sat in silence quite frequently while she thought. Vicki is very concerned with her role as a gatekeeper and mentioned that she “cares very much” for her students. She also discussed how she has struggled with trying to earn tenure and raise a family. She is satisfied at her current university. She often referred to the other faculty members as “the group” and how a “team approach” is important to gatekeeping. Vicki commented that her experience in substance abuse counseling assists her in her gatekeeping role because it has helped her to be comfortable confronting and handling conflict. Vicki encouraged me to work hard and to call upon her for anything. She felt that the topic of gatekeeping “was very important” and “necessary” for counselor educators.

Participant # 6: Wendy

I met Wendy about 30 minutes after concluding my interview with Vicki. Wendy had attended one of my presentations the previous day and had introduced herself. She seemed excited about the interview. Wendy was quite animated and used her arms a lot when talking. We met in the cafeteria and I purchased a bottle of water for her. Wendy said that she was excited about the interview and was eager to begin. She was dressed very casually and didn't wear makeup. She mentioned that she lives in a rural mountain town and that she is reflective of the town she lives in.

Wendy teaches exclusively in the school counseling program and seems to advocate quite a bit for her program. She is dedicated to the school counseling field and pushes her program for higher admissions standards. Wendy discussed how she has lived in numerous areas around the country and that she possesses an independent streak. She reiterated on several occasions that her job as a gatekeeper is to produce quality school counselors.

Participant # 7: Alan

I had arranged to call Alan's hotel room when the conference began to decide on a meeting time. When I called the hotel operator, his name was not listed as a guest. So, I concluded that the interview would not take place. On the evening the conference ended, Alan called my room and asked if we could meet briefly for the interview. I told him that I had tried calling but he was not listed as a guest. Alan said that he decided to stay with a friend who lives in the area as a last-minute decision. I agreed to meet him in the cafeteria within 30 minutes.

I met Alan in the cafeteria and we quickly looked for an area to sit. The cafeteria was virtually empty so we sat in a booth at the back. Alan was dressed in a red shirt and khakis; he was articulate and professional. When he answered the interview questions, he chose his words very carefully and reflected on his answers. He mentioned that "gatekeeping is necessary" and that counselor educators need to "take a solemn vow to protect the community." He complimented me on choosing a difficult topic for a dissertation study by saying "hats off to you for going there." He often asked me questions about my thoughts on a specific issue and I had to redirect his questions so my biases wouldn't seem obvious.

Participant # 8: Fred

Back in my hometown, I arranged to interview Fred at his office. Fred was the only participant whom I knew professionally prior to the interview. I arrived at Fred's office early and sat in a waiting area on the couch. The waiting area was cluttered and messy and I was a bit uncomfortable. One of the graduate assistants walked in and asked if I was there for supervision. I said that I wasn't and talked to her briefly. Fred walked in and said that he was taking a break from his class. I told him that I was early and willing to wait. He suggested that we sit outside his class in the hallway and begin the interview. There weren't any other classes on the floor so I decided that would work.

I felt uncomfortable with Fred from the very beginning. It may have been from sitting in the hallway or that I knew him professionally but I wanted to get the interview over with. I paced myself because I didn't want to rush the interview and I expected that Fred would offer great insight. Fred discussed at length the university's appeals procedures. I noticed that he wanted to keep the content more factual than affective. He was helpful and provided illustrated scenarios. At the conclusion of the interview, Fred wished me luck and told me to contact him soon for the second round.

Summary of Participant Profiles

Eight participant profiles were introduced in the previous section. These participants discussed their perceptions and experiences about the topic of gatekeeping. Individual profiles were created to assist the readers in understanding my initial experience with the participants. However, because the participant pool was specific and participants were easily recognizable, the profiles were brief in an attempt to ensure participant anonymity.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection consisted of three rounds of individual interviews, researcher observations, journal reflections, and document analysis. Participants volunteered for an initial 60-90 minute face-to-face interview and two follow-up interviews conducted by electronic mail. For the purpose of data analysis, initial face-to-face interviews were audio taped and transcribed, and electronic mail interviews were printed.

First Round of Individual Interviews

The information gleaned from the first round of interviews addressed the grand research question: What are counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process? The following initial interview questions [Appendix D] were utilized to explore this research question.

1. How do you define gatekeeping and its purpose?
2. What are your experiences with gatekeeping and how do you describe the process?
3. What does the gatekeeping process entail for you, your program, and institution where you are employed?
4. What are your perceptions of the efficacy of gatekeeping?
5. What are your perceptions about how multiculturalism pertains to the gatekeeping process?

Results of Initial Interviews

Once the interviews were converted from audio tape to transcripts for all eight participants, data analysis was initiated. Initially, open coding procedures were utilized to organize the information into general categories or themes regarding the process of gatekeeping. Next, I used axial coding to identify commonalities and relate concepts among participants' responses. Finally, selective coding aided in the formal conceptualizations of all the data obtained. Analysis of the data proved helpful in organizing the content into a meaningful and sequential timeline. Based on analysis of data from the initial interviews, a three-phase gatekeeping process was identified to tentatively explain participants' reflections. The three phases include: (a) pre-admissions screening, (b) post-admissions screening, and (c) remediation plan. Additionally, two prominent themes emerged from participants' responses. These themes included: (a) cultural sensitivity and (b) support.

Pre-Admissions Screening Phase

Based on participants' responses and a review of documents, all the programs in which the participants work utilized pre-admission screening procedures. The pre-admission screening procedures were further reduced to components: (a) didactic and related performance criteria and (b) interpersonal interaction performance criteria.

Didactic Criteria

All eight participants listed criteria used to evaluate applications for admissions. Didactic and related performance criteria include standardized test scores, undergraduate grade point average, recommendation letters, and work experience. Participants' responses overwhelmingly indicated that their programs and universities use these criteria

as a basis for admission. Though these criteria were evident in the initial application, the range and importance were decided by the individual programs and universities. Nate indicated that his graduate school often dictates which criteria are necessary.

Nate We can't even look at the applications until they fulfill the graduate school admissions criteria. The graduate school weeds through the applications for us.

Vicki described her experience when advocating for a student who did not meet the graduate school admissions criteria.

Vicki I encountered a student who didn't meet the graduate school's entrance requirements but had in-depth work experience. This student was also racially different and I knew she would add depth to the program. Some of our faculty really advocated for this student to be creatively admitted. It was because the team solicited the graduate school that change occurred.

Interpersonal Interaction

Although all eight participants utilized standardized test scores, undergraduate grade point average, recommendation letters, and work experience to evaluate applicants, they used the interview process as a deciding factor for admittance. Once applicants possessed the performance criteria set forth by the department or the graduate school, they were interviewed by the faculty members in an individual and/or group format. Participants overwhelmingly suggested that the interview was significant when evaluating applicants. Wendy and Nedra provided a foundation for the importance of the interview.

Wendy The interview is really key. They can look good on paper and we would be so close to admitting them and then we meet them. And, it all changes.

Nedra The personal interview is crucial. You can tell so much about a person once you meet them. I don't care much about the GPA or GRE if the interview goes south.

The participants' experiences did differ in terms of the format and content of the interviews. Participants offered several suggestions regarding what worked for them at their respective programs. Fred and Wendy indicated that their programs utilized an individual interview format when meeting with applicants.

Fred I like to spend time with the applicant and let them know from the very beginning that this program is very hands on. I feel it is my responsibility to make that statement in the interview.

Wendy I feel better if I meet with each applicant individually and see how they handle the stress of the situation. I like to ask my own questions on diversity and prejudices so that I feel more of a sense of ownership in the process.

Alan preferred to conduct group interviews in order for the applicants to have a chance to interact with one another.

Alan I like to interview the applicants as a group. Then, I can observe their interpersonal skills, flexibility, and openness to others. A group interview also allows me to see them display possible rigidity when working with others who may have different views. I don't penalize them for having strong views but I want to see that they are willing to listen to others.

Fred and Wendy utilized the current students in their program to assist with the interview process. Fred felt that current students offer an alternative perspective when evaluating applicants. Wendy empowered her current students to become involved in the interview process and to cast votes.

Fred We hook the applicants up with a student because the student will pick up on things that we don't.

Wendy The faculty votes as well as current students so everyone has an equal vote and its a democratic process.

The participants also utilized role play vignettes, counseling simulations, writing samples, and specific questioning during the individual and group interviews.

Nedra The personal interviews are quite in-depth because we have them respond to scenarios in person and in writing. We don't expect them to come in with counseling skills but we want them to deal with diversity issues and other things.

Stacy I like to have the applicants role play because then you get a sense of who they are as a person. I need to have a sense that they have a caring heart and a rational mind and that they are trainable. We also have the applicants respond to scenarios in writing so we can evaluate their writing skills.

Alan I have them field questions of diversity and see how they handle that.

Often, counselor educators evaluated specific criteria using a rubric. Rubrics can help organize data and visually assist the user. Nedra utilized rubrics during the admissions and interview process at her university and found that they were helpful.

Nedra My colleagues and I rate the applicants on selection criteria established on a rubric that we use. And, it is helpful.

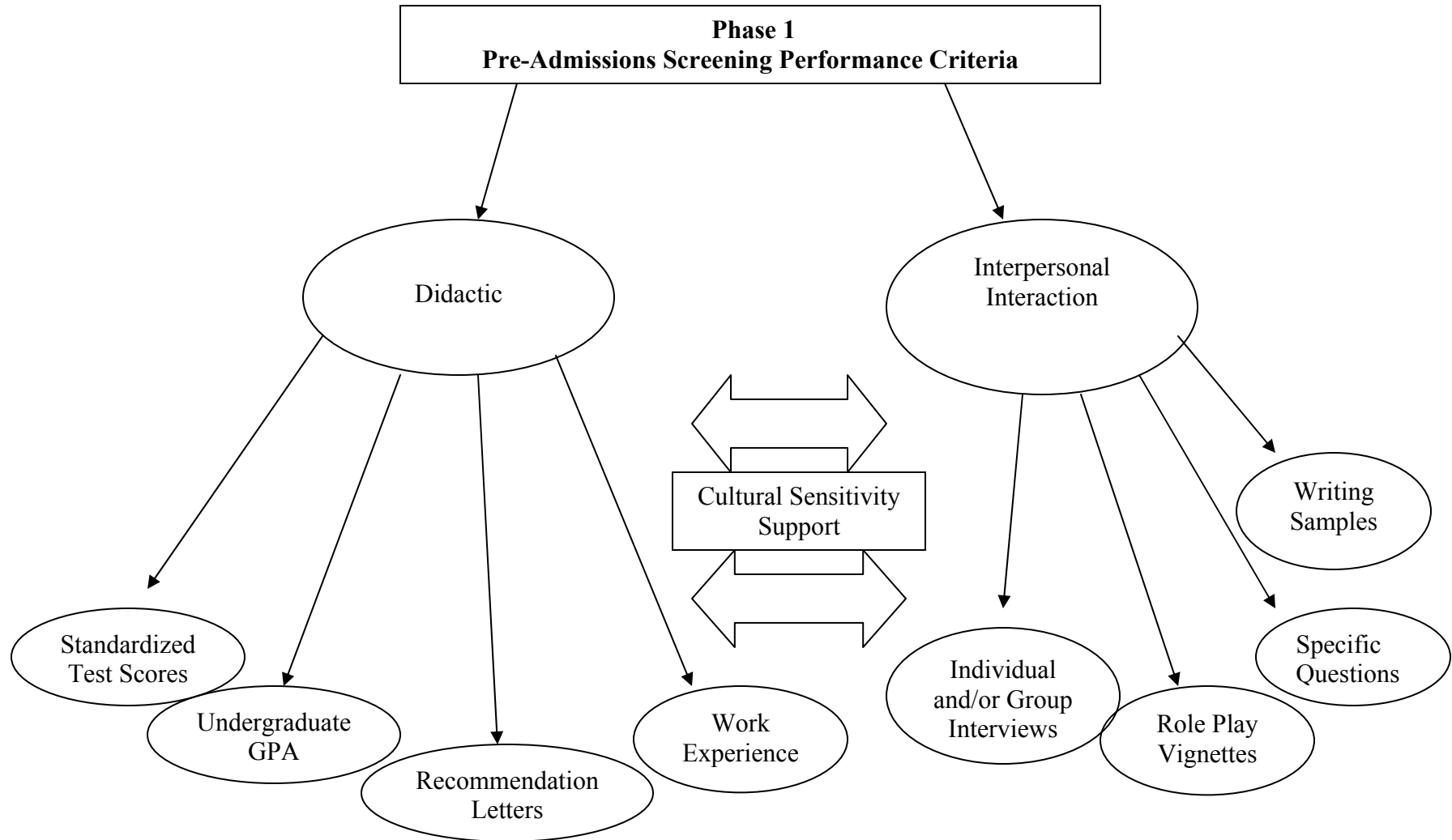
In Wendy's experience, a rubric was ineffective and her department chair frowned upon the practice.

Wendy We tried using a rubric where an applicant would get so many points for GRE, work experience... But, the chair didn't think it was a good idea. He didn't like the idea of a paper trail and would rather keep it looser.

Figure 1 serves as a visual representation of the commonalities found throughout the pre-admission screening phase.

Figure 1

Initial Round of Data Analysis – Individual Interviews



Post-Admission Screening Phase

The participants revealed that after students are admitted to their programs, evaluation measures continue. Participant responses indicated that even though students have been accepted, their status is provisional until certain standards are met. Post-admission screening procedures consisted of two components that included: (a) didactic and related performance criteria and (b) interpersonal interaction performance criteria.

Didactic Criteria

Didactic and related performance criteria consisted of academic performance and standardized tests such as the National Counselor Examination (NCE) and comprehensive examinations. Grades are units of measurement in graduate programs but Nate voiced his concern about how they are awarded.

Nate I have heard of cases where professors are just too nice. I think grade inflation is out of control. Counselor educators don't want to hurt students because they are naturally humanistic. They want to see students grow and blossom. But, from a practical standpoint there is a flaw here and an accountability piece.

Nedra and Stacy discussed how they work with students who are having academic difficulties by offering them additional work.

Nedra C's are not acceptable in our program. If a student receives a C, then the course needs to be retaken or some kind of remedial work is offered. For example, we will give them some counseling tapes to view and then we ask that they submit a videotape with those skills evident before they can move on. It doesn't happen too often but many times the students graduate as excellent counselors but, developmentally, they needed some additional work.

Stacy If a student receives a C in one of my classes, I allow them to complete additional work. I will then change the C to a B because students need a B or better to move past the skills course.

Participants expressed that standardized tests such as the National Counselor Examination (NCE) or program-developed comprehensive examinations are necessary in counseling graduate programs to measure students' knowledge base. Fred and Nate concurred that academic deficiencies must be addressed before students take their comprehensive examinations.

Fred I would rather develop a remediation plan with a student than have that student take the comprehensive exam and fail. I hope that I make students aware of their deficiencies way before they test at a local and national level. That is a gatekeeping function.

Nate There have been a couple of instances where we had to address a deficiency before students sat for our exam. The students needed to achieve a standard that was acceptable beforehand.

Stacy utilized her program's comprehensive examination to remediate students before they graduate.

Stacy I am not a test person but I like to use the comps as a way for me to evaluate their writing style because counselors have to communicate with a variety of people. That is something that I look for and if it is an area of weakness then I hope to remediate and offer suggestions before graduation.

Interpersonal Interaction

Interpersonal interaction performance criteria examined how students interact with faculty members, site supervisors, other professionals, and their peers. Participants noted that interpersonal interactions during supervision, practicum and internship experiences, and formal discussions with professors often indicate positive or negative personality characteristics that would otherwise be missed by grading and testing alone. These findings are consistent with Remley and Herlihy's (2005) assertion that students may possess strong intellectual ability but lack the personal characteristics to be an effective counselor. As graduation approaches, students often request letters of recommendation or endorsements from faculty members. Students'

culminating experiences, academic and interpersonal, are often described in these letters of endorsement.

Nate and Stacy described when students' anxiety enters the supervision process.

Nate Because the nature of counseling and the training is so intense and probing, students need to self explore and be willing to self disclose during the training. It is not easy for beginning trainees to separate the professional self from the personal self due to personalization issues. So, if they have some personal issues that are not resolved then they tend to overpersonalize and, emotionally, it is hard for them to handle. They cannot take feedback very well and become very aggressive and confrontational with me and the group.

Stacy We have had multiple problems with an individual and at the affective level he just doesn't get it, personally, and with other people. When he was at his practicum site it was a horrible experience with the supervisor. He didn't do well but marginally well so he passed. But then when he went to the internship setting, it was absolutely horrible. We had to take him out and sit with him, devise a contract, and talk to him about things we would like for him to improve. He did that over the summer and the results were marginal, enough to pass, but marginal. He went to another internship site and talked to the site supervisor because we wanted someone very experienced that could be very directive with him. And she is having problems with him. We just don't know what to do with him.

Counselor educators and students often have formal discussions in various settings including classrooms, conferences, meetings, and social gatherings. These settings offer more opportunities for counselor educators and students to interact.

Wendy I often ask my students why they want to work as school counselors and some answer that they want summer off. That is a big "Strike One" with me. Their motivations are obvious.

Vicki One student told me that he enrolled in our program because a diploma from my university would look great on his wall. His attitude was all about self interest.

Once students prepare to graduate and apply for counseling positions, often they will request letters of recommendation or endorsements from their professors and

advisors. Helen voiced her concern when asked to recommend a student for a counseling position.

Helen I was asked to write a letter of recommendation for a student and I didn't want to put my reputation on the line. I wrote a very factual statement of when the person started the program and so on.

Nedra's program utilized an endorsement program when recommending students for positions.

Nedra There was a case where confidentiality was breached in a group internship setting and it became very difficult so we decided to bring this issue to the dean. After several meetings, we decided that the student would graduate but without endorsement. We didn't want to put our program on the line.

Faculty members in some programs meet as a group and evaluate students who are enrolled in the program. Participants stated that staffings or evaluation meetings can be conducted when academic or interpersonal issues arise with students.

Nedra We meet once a year as a department and have what we call a "faculty review." We have a set of competencies that include professional and personal development. We complete the form as a group and then sit down with the student and give them feedback.

Stacy Each year, as a faculty, we evaluate the students. We look at different factors including personality, skills, and academic ability. Every student gets a letter saying that we have reviewed the students in our program and your progress is satisfactory. If we have some concerns, then we write that in the letter and have a meeting with the student.

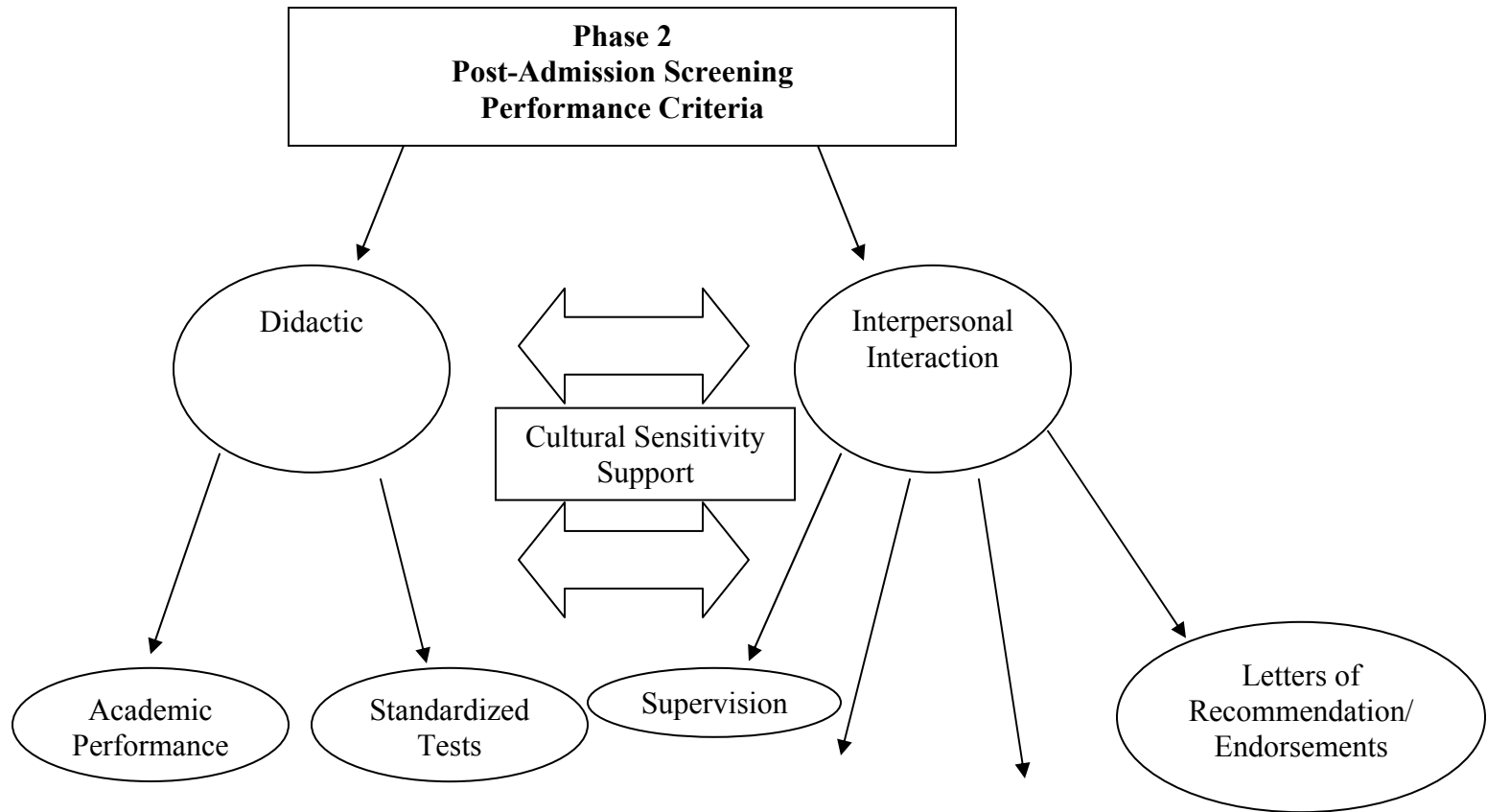
Figure 2 represents a visual depiction of participants' experiences of the post-admissions screening process.

Remediation Plan Phase

All eight participants confirmed that remediation occurred when students were in need of additional assistance. The remediation phase consisted of two components that include: (a) intensified supervision and (b) personal development. These findings are

Figure 2

Initial Round of Data Analysis – Individual Interviews



consistent with the ACA Code of Ethics (1995), specifically Standard F.3.a., which states: Counselors assist students and supervisees in securing remedial assistance when needed, and dismiss from the training program supervisees who are unable to provide competent services due to academic or personal limitations.

Intensified Supervision

Students who are struggling academically and/or personally may be required to undergo an intensified supervision requirement. Intensified supervision included producing and providing additional counseling tapes, attending additional supervision sessions, and repeating coursework. Vicki, Fred, and Wendy required their students to provide additional tapes of counseling sessions and attend supplementary supervision sessions.

<i>Vicki</i>	I structure remedial work and identify areas in need of improvement. When I realize that I cannot place a student in practicum due to a lack in skills, then I require extra taping in the techniques course. If I get a sense that a student is struggling a heir internship site, then I require additional supervision with me or another faculty member.
<i>Fred</i>	When I develop remediation plans, I personally meet with the student and ask for additional counseling tapes from their site or require extended supervision.
<i>Wendy</i>	We had to rope in a couple of students and require additional taping and supervision. They didn't have to leave the program but didn't graduate on time because of their remediation.

Another example of how supervision was intensified included requiring participants to repeat specific coursework. For example, Nedra, Alan, and Fred require students to repeat coursework until the skills are demonstrated.

Nedra If a student earns a C in one of the skills classes, it [the course] must be retaken. Additionally, the student must demonstrate the skills on videotape before the grade will be changed to a B.

Alan We've had folks retake courses until they demonstrated the necessary skills. That was the bottom line and it is pretty objective.

Fred As a part of a remediation plan, students will take courses over. This requirement is also a way to document that we have addressed this issue with students and have made them aware of their deficiencies.

An alternative means to monitor remediation performance is to reassign a student to a faculty member or supervisor. Wendy felt that one of her students would benefit from working with another faculty member.

Wendy I could not work with a student any more so another faculty member stepped in. We do hand off students that way to have a better match.

Fred and Wendy agreed that supervision styles vary greatly and that students should be exposed to a variety of supervisors to meet their needs.

Fred Another way I deal with gatekeeping is to have students supervised by as many supervisors as possible. That way, if I see red flags then I can consult with the other supervisors and it becomes a collaborative effort.

Wendy I supervise a lot of the students. I know they are all not going to like me and I won't like them. So, our department works as a team to keep us happy and them happy.

Personal Development

Participants also indicated that counselor education programs can require remediation in the form of personal development on the part of the student. According to participants in this investigation, personal development includes: (a) a leave of absence, (b) personal counseling, and (c) counseling to withdraw. Helen discussed her concerns

regarding a student and explained why she requested that the student take a leave of absence.

Helen I had numerous problems with a student so I suggested she take a leave from the program. I thought that time on her own might do her some good.

Nedra suggested that a student undergo personal counseling while continuing in the program.

Nedra It was real obvious that one of my students needed to work through some personal issues. The department met with the student and recommended counseling as a requirement for continuing in the program.

Alan, Wendy, and Vicki have counseled students to withdraw from their programs or had students self-select out of the program.

Alan There have been some instances where we have counseled people out. They have been admitted to the program but there was a rigidity to their thinking that prevented them from being fully empathic or an effective counselor. When we have found a mismatch, we help that student find an alternative program or career choice.

Wendy For real serious issues like plagiarism or a breach of confidentiality, we counsel the student out of the program.

Vicki It is quite obvious when students know that this field is not for them. It's important to process it and, most times, the students will self-select themselves out so we won't have to.

The findings presented in this section are consistent with Corey, Haynes, and Moulton's (2003) recommendation to utilize several types of remediation including increased supervision, a leave of absence, personal counseling, and additional coursework. These findings also are congruent with CACREP's "2001 Standards," specifically Section II.F., that states "when evaluations indicate that a student

is not appropriate for the program, counseling faculty should assist in facilitating the student's transition out of the program, and if possible, into a more appropriate area of study" (CACREP, 2000). Figure 3 serves as a visual representation of participants' perceptions of remediation procedures.

Related Themes

Two prominent themes that were identified by participants appeared to be interwoven throughout each phase of the gatekeeping process. These themes included: (a) cultural sensitivity and (b) support. For the purposes of this research, cultural sensitivity is defined as participants' awareness, knowledge, and skills when supervising, instructing, and evaluating students from diverse backgrounds. Participants also responded that support from their colleagues and university is integral throughout the gatekeeping process.

Pre-Admission Screening Phase

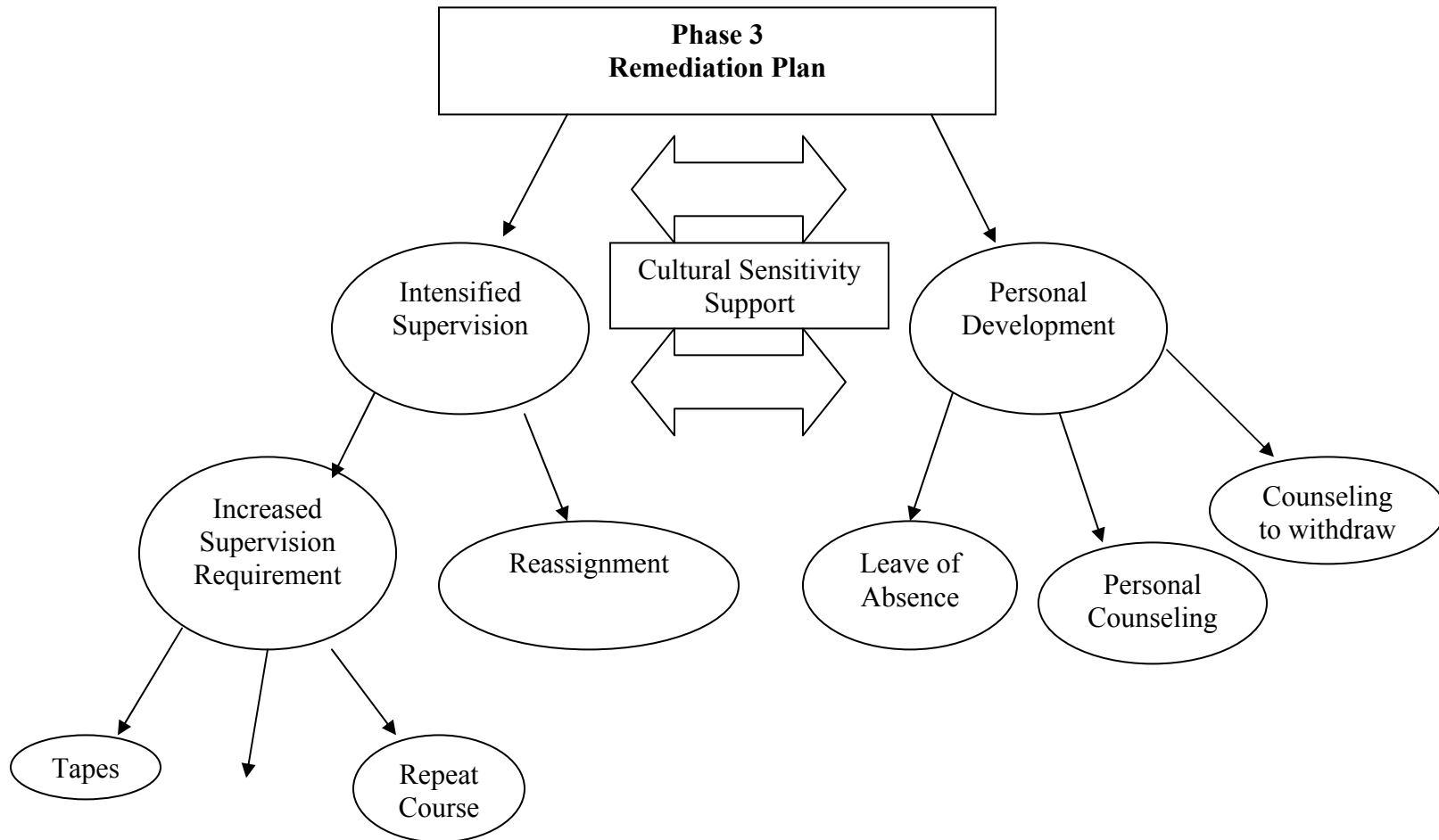
The first phase of the gatekeeping process, identified as pre-admissions screening, entailed prospective students submitting an application with test scores, recommendation letters, and personal statements. The first phase also includes an interview with faculty members, role play vignettes, and writing samples. Wendy discussed her program's vision when selecting potential students.

<i>Wendy</i>	We are encouraged to promote acceptance of visible and non-visible minority students. We are not always made aware of the minority status. With some minority groups, we are a bit more lenient and we will look at them more carefully. Almost like reverse discrimination. We want to reach out to those groups and make opportunities available but, at the same time, not accept someone based on the box that is checked.
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Wendy further discussed how her program openly discusses this issue with applicants.

Figure 3

Initial Round of Data Analysis – Individual Interviews



Wendy At times, socioeconomic status is obvious. An applicant who is not very refined and sophisticated interviewed and we thought that this person would not be able to develop a level of professionalism to advance or promote the field. So, we discussed that openly. We have some minority members on our faculty and we try to be sensitive to those topics.

Helen taught undergraduate classes and utilized this experience when interacting with individuals who show an interest in the counseling graduate program.

Helen I teach undergraduates and openly discuss what counseling values are. I don't ask students to change their values but they need to be aware that there are different realities and need to be tolerant. This is a gatekeeping function for me.

Helen further discussed how she acquaints herself with potential applicants while instructing an undergraduate class.

Helen I thoroughly read their papers and I make notes if they display a lot of fundamentalist values. It is a red flag for me if this person has a very rigid attitude.

Participants' perceptions revealed the need for support during the pre-admissions screening. Participants responded by saying that they approach tasks as "a group" and believe that institutional support is vital. Vicki, Wendy, and Helen discussed how their team approach assists them during this phase.

Vicki Rather than having one person be in charge, the team that I work with balances out less sensitive views or beliefs. One time, the team advocated for a student to be creatively admitted. Change occurred because the team solicited the graduate school.

Wendy In general, my program works well together. It's a push and pull with numbers and quality versus quantity but a balance does emerge.

Helen In terms of what is acceptable and not acceptable, the faculty is on the same page. On a whole, the faculty takes the gatekeeping process very seriously.

Alan revealed that his faculty members may have different opinions but compromise on decisions.

Alan During admissions, there are always different opinions but we work to get on the same page. We come to an agreement on how things should be handled and we deal with the red flags as they arise.

Post-Admission Screening Phase

The second phase of the gatekeeping process entails post-admission screening procedures which assessed the academic aptitude and interpersonal performance of current students. Participants discussed that cultural awareness is often revealed through discussions and course work. Helen and Nate explained how they process this issue with students.

Helen I can pick up on cultural issues when I teach the techniques class. Students have quoted the Bible in their papers and talked about God during counseling sessions and don't show a lot of tolerance. Students have learned to talk the talk so I work with them to broaden their minds. I try to move them from that dualistic way of thinking to a relativistic way.

Nate In all of my classes, I discuss counseling beliefs because students need to understand the profession and who and what we stand for. I insist that they decide whether this is what they want.

Participants identified the need for support if issues arise with current students.

Nate and Vicki agreed that they depend on their team to process issues.

Nate Students do need to demonstrate proficiencies in each class. However, we will advocate for a student and explain to the faculty that this student should not be sanctioned in any way. So, we have an open forum.

Vicki If a receive a tape from a student that is about to be placed in practicum and I have some concerns, then I touch base with the whole team. I give them the tape and state my concerns. If they feel the same, which they usually do, we develop a remediation plan.

Remediation Plan Phase

Based on participants' responses, the final phase of the gatekeeping process included remediation procedures such as increased supervision, a leave of absence, personal counseling, and students self-selecting out of the program. Again, the constructs of cultural sensitivity and support were identified by participants. With regard to cultural sensitivity, Alan utilizes his faculty members and seeks their advice.

Alan We are never flying solo. We make staffing decisions on current students in the program and the entire faculty is involved. We evaluate each student in a culturally sensitive manner and because the entire group is involved, then it provides a system of checks and balances.

Helen All counselor educators need to be aware of their biases and to do whatever it takes to remain professional. We cannot deny graduation to people when they have invested money and time based on a personal bias.

When handling remediation situations, participants discussed the need for support from their faculty and university. Fred explained how support is extended to his program from various university departments.

Fred If a student is dismissed and assigned extra remediation, we have an appeals process. When a student has appealed our decision, our dean is notified. He knows the importance of counseling and the implications and fully supports us. We've had situations go to the provost and university attorneys and both have supported us.

Vicki and Nedra experienced that when faculty members discuss issues with students, the outcome is often decided by majority vote.

Vicki There was a time when I was adamantly opposed to a student staying in the program and the team was not. They decided that the student would be under heightened scrutiny but not dismissed. I was okay with that because we worked on it together.

Nedra One time, I recommended that a student be counseled out and the team didn't agree with me. They discussed that the student should stay but complete several extra activities.

Summary of Initial Interviews

Analysis of initial interviews revealed that participants identified three main phases of the gatekeeping process that include: (a) pre-admission screening, (b) post-admission screening, and (c) remediation plan. Participants consistently discussed their perceptions of the gatekeeping process and further revealed two additional stages within each phase. Additionally, two prominent themes emerged from participants' responses. Participants overwhelmingly identified their sensitivity to culture and need for support in each gatekeeping phase. These themes remained interwoven throughout each phase and affected participants' gatekeeping perceptions.

Second Round of Individual Interviews

The questions included in the second round of individual interviews were developed upon completion of analysis of the first round of data collection. Accordingly, questions developed for the second round of interviews were designed to build on information revealed from the first round. The intent of each question was to obtain clarification regarding counselor educators' perceptions about the gatekeeping process. More specifically, the questions were intended to verify the gatekeeping phases and related themes that were identified by the participants. In the second round of interviews, the following questions were asked:

1. Based on the analysis of data from the first round of interviews, a three- phase gatekeeping process was identified to tentatively explain participants' reflections. How does this process align with your experiences? What additional information

regarding your experiences would you include? Which remediation strategy has proven to be the most effective and why? Please include any other strategies listed. What are your suggestions for changes to the words or structure presented?

2. Two prominent themes, which are interwoven in each phase of the gatekeeping process, were also revealed from the participants' responses. In the first round of interviews, participants overwhelmingly described their sensitivity to culture in several areas of the gatekeeping process that includes admissions criteria, personal interviews, supervision experiences, and remediation plans. How does this pertain to your experiences of gatekeeping and what additional information would you include? Participants also identified the need for support from their colleagues, department, and university when addressing gatekeeping issues. Participants often referred to their colleagues as "the team." How does this notion align with your experiences? In which stage is support from your colleagues most crucial and why?

The second round of interviews was initiated and completed by electronic mail. Two follow-up electronic mails were sent as reminders and encouraged participants to continue with this research. Seven of the eight participants responded to the second round of questions within two weeks. After I consulted with my methodologist, Vicki was eventually eliminated from the study because she did not respond to the email correspondence. Several attempts had been made to enlist Vicki's support and participation and it was imperative for analysis to begin.

Results of Second Round Interviews

All of the information gathered during the second round of interviews was organized into the existing framework and therefore integrated into the three phases that reflected counselor educators' initial perceptions of the gatekeeping process. Coding procedures were used to expand existing categories, illuminate current properties, and identify new properties that provide details about each category. In summary, participant responses from the second round of questions served to broaden and elaborate information obtained from the initial interviews. Participants' responses continued to emphasize the three phases of the gatekeeping process and the interwoven themes of multiculturalism and support. Each gatekeeping phase was elaborated on and the themes were expanded.

Pre-Admission Screening Phase

The pre-admission screening phase was expanded to include: (a) considering additional training or education such as a master's degree from another discipline, (b) submitting a goal or personal statement with the application materials, (c) arranging an informal informational meeting, and (d) awareness of cultural sensitivity during the interviews and questioning periods. Additionally, the term didactic was changed to academic aptitude for a better fit.

Academic Aptitude

Based on participants' responses, the first stage in the pre-admissions screening process entailed academic aptitude and related performance criteria such as standardized test scores, undergraduate grade point average, recommendation letters, and work experience. Stacy included the use of a goal statement so the program could understand the applicants' motives and objectives for obtaining a degree in counseling.

<i>Stacy</i>	We require a goal statement so we can get an understanding of the individual's perception of the school counseling profession and
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what they intend to do.

Alan considered any additional education or training that an applicant may have.

Alan We consider other post-bachelor's or master's-level training. We feel that this adds to the program and we factor this kind of experience in.

Interpersonal Interaction

The second stage entailed interpersonal interaction criteria such as individual interviews, group interviews, role play vignettes, and specific questioning. Nedra placed an additional emphasis on the content she wanted addressed during the counseling vignettes.

Nedra The vignettes we use during the preadmission process help to identify some aspects of prospective students' level of cultural sensitivity.

Fred added that his program had an informal "meet and greet" session and often used this experience to become familiar with applicants.

Fred We use personal interviews both before the applicant submits materials and after the submission. We believe that personal contact is key to the gatekeeping process. When a person shows an interest in the program, we then arrange a meet and greet and try to get to know them instantly.

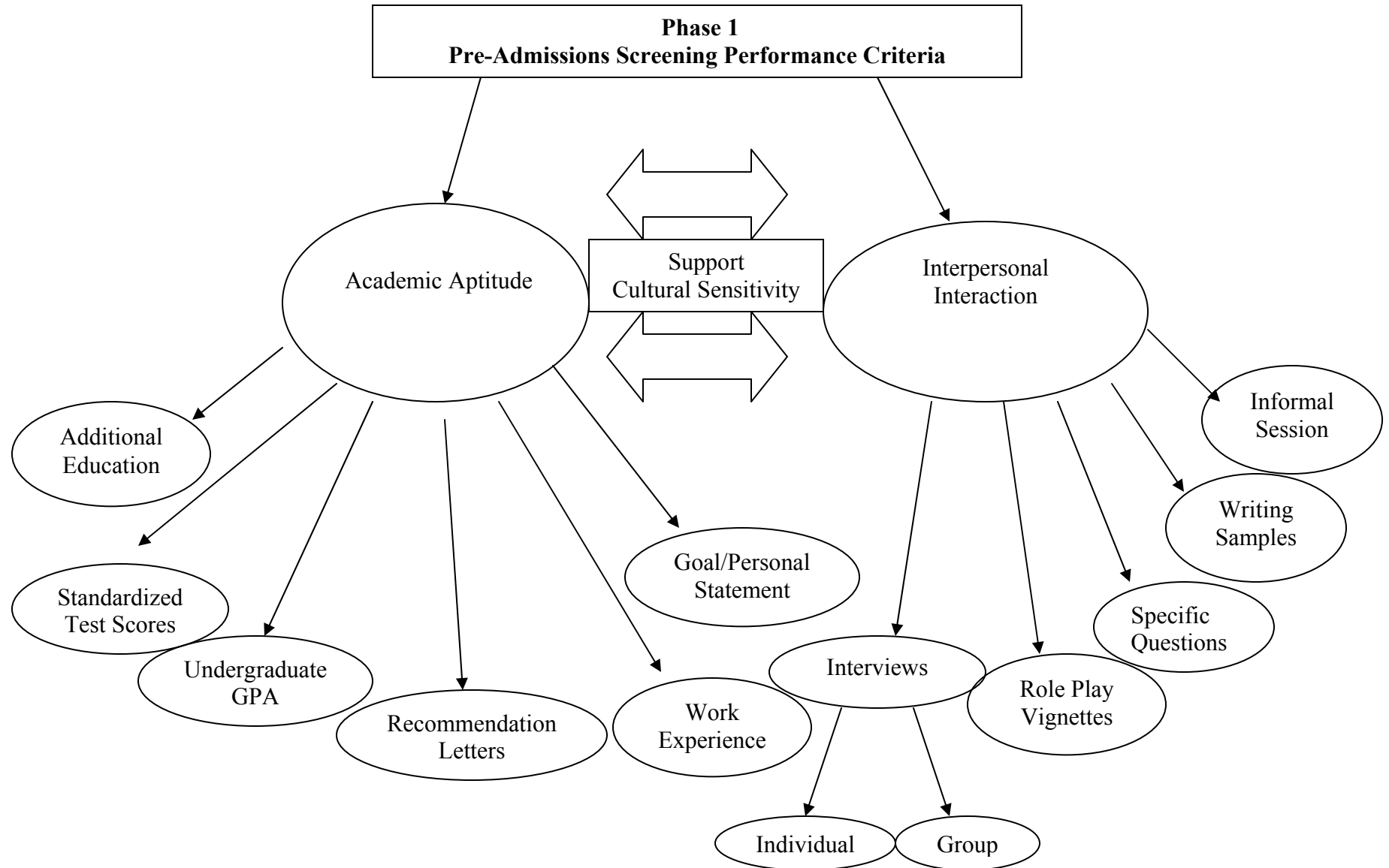
Figure 4 represents participants' responses to pre-admission screening procedures.

Post-Admission Screening Phase

The post-admissions phase included measures to evaluate students' academic and interpersonal performance once enrolled in a master's-level counseling program. Post-admission screening procedures included academic performance criteria and interpersonal interaction performance criteria.

Figure 4

Second Round of Data Analysis – Initial Email Correspondance



Academic Aptitude

Academic aptitude and related performance criteria included academic performance and standardized tests. Helen and Nedra both considered the skills class to be imperative when evaluating students' academic performance and Nedra added practicum and internship experiences.

Helen One of our gatekeeping courses is the skills class. If they don't perform adequately in skills role plays, we then require students to repeat the course.

Nedra Students must demonstrate successful counseling techniques in the skills class. Later on, students should again demonstrate these skills in their practicum and internship classes.

Students are also evaluated through the use of standardized tests such as the National Counselor Examination (NCE) or comprehensive examinations. When assessing her students, Stacy utilized the PRAXIS.

Stacy Our school counseling students are required to take the PRAXIS which is another performance indicator similar to the NCE.

Additionally, Nate and Nedra wanted their students to demonstrate multicultural competence in courses and practice.

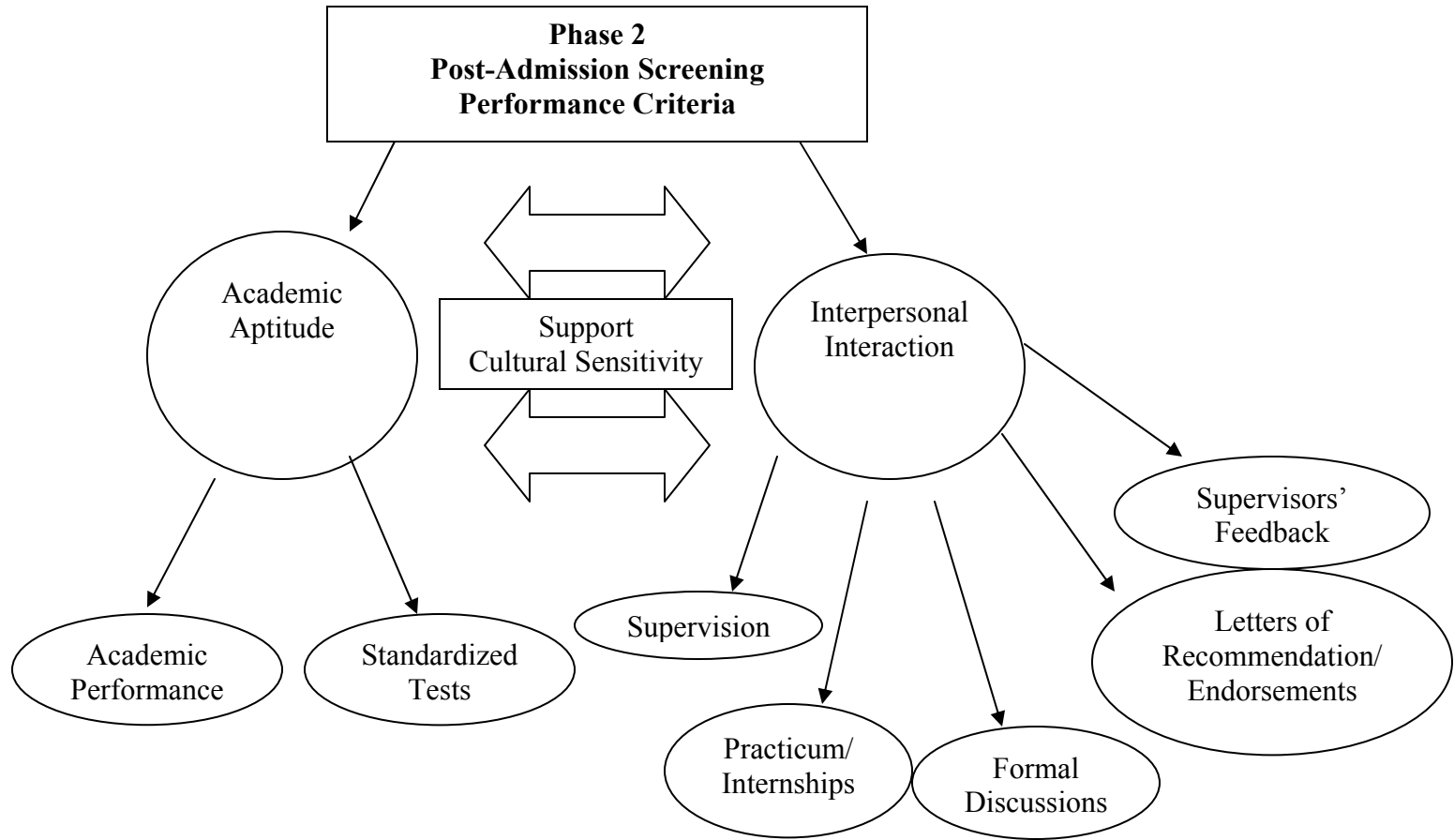
Nate I believe it's important to ensure students demonstrate multicultural competence when they are at their clinical site.

Nedra Valuing and respecting diversity are components of many of our courses, so we are able to see development in this area throughout the two years the students are with us.

Figure 5 serves as a visual representation of participants' responses pertaining to post-admission screening procedures.

Figure 5

Second Round of Data Analysis – Initial Email Correspondance



Remediation Plan Phase

Based on participants' responses, the remediation plan phase consisted of two components including intensified supervision and personal development.

Intensified Supervision

Students who are undergoing intensified supervision may be required to provide additional tapes, meet for individual supervision, repeat coursework, or be reassigned to another faculty member. A new finding emerged from two participants' responses. Stacy and Alan formulated a contract with their students and listed specific behaviors that need to improve or assignments that must be completed.

<i>Stacy</i>	For students who need additional help, we devise a contract with a list of activities that the candidate must pursue, based on their areas of concern.
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<i>Alan</i>	If students do not meet certain academic or personal standards, we provide specific behavioral expectations that must be met.
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Personal Development

Personal development is another remediation strategy that included students taking a leave of absence or undergoing required counseling. Helen has mixed thoughts on the effectiveness of remediation for personal development.

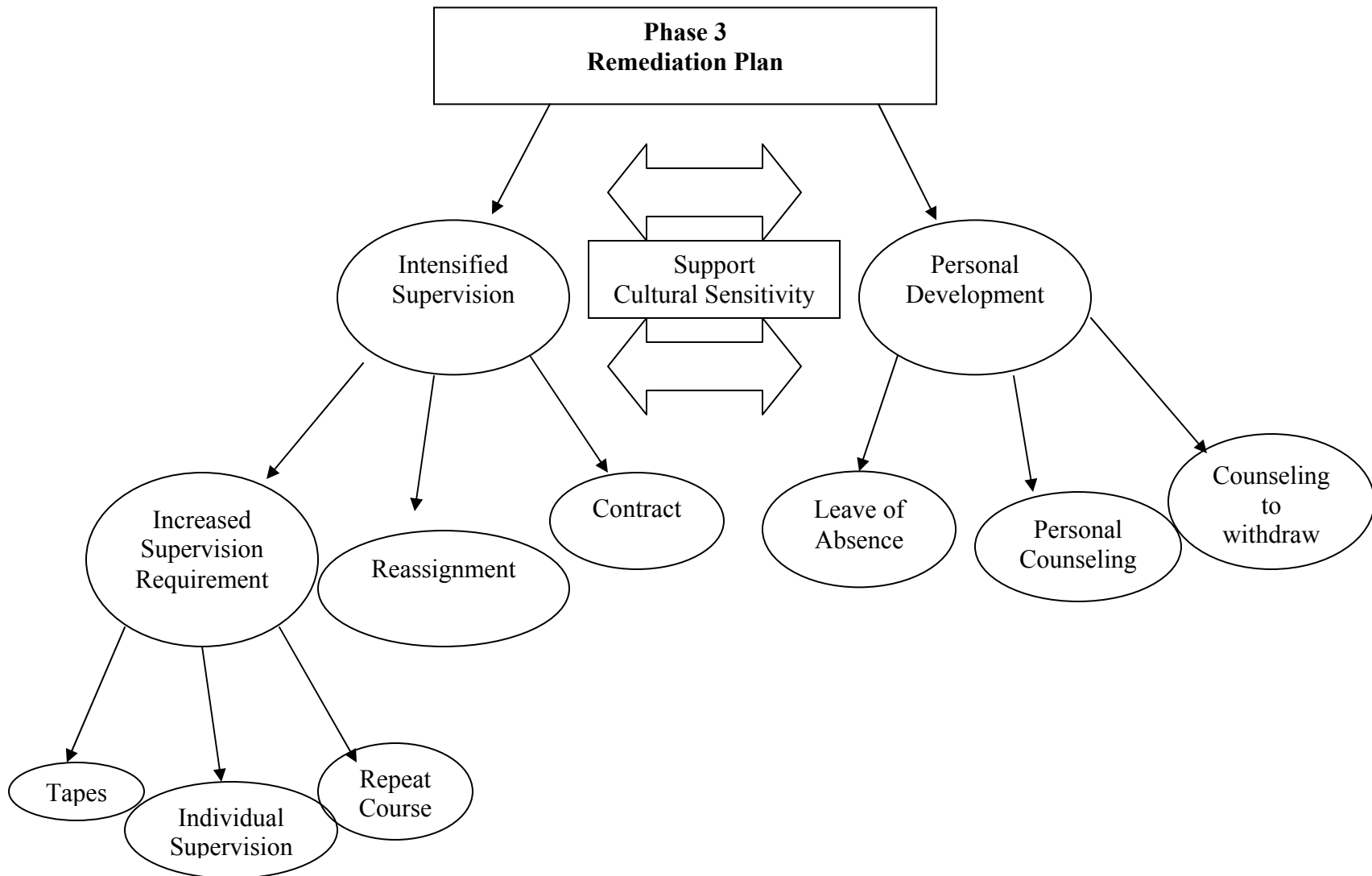
<i>Helen</i>	In my experience, remediation for personal development has a low success rate, regardless of the intervention. Remediation for academic performance is more successful because of strategies such as study skills training and providing additional resources.
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Figure 6 depicts remediation plans identified by the participants.

Based on Fred's experiences of remediation plans and dialogue specific to how students responded to remediation efforts, an additional phase or stage was considered.

Figure 6

Second Round of Data Analysis – Initial Email Correspondance



Fred A fourth phase needs to be added. If students do not agree to remediation or remediation attempts proved ineffective, then a program must dismiss or terminate the student.

Fred's suggestion regarding participants' perceptions of the efficacy of evaluation was presented to participants during the third round of interviews in order to elicit more information. Based on information gathered during the second round of interviews, participants verified and elaborated on the gatekeeping phases that were identified in the initial interviews. The three gatekeeping phases were expanded and new information regarding the evaluation of remediation plans was presented.

Related Themes

As stated earlier, two prominent themes emerged from the first round of interviews: (a) cultural sensitivity and (b) support. For the purposes of this research, cultural sensitivity is defined as participants' awareness, knowledge, and skills when supervising, instructing, and evaluating students from diverse backgrounds. Participants also responded that support from their colleagues and university is integral throughout the gatekeeping process. Participants overwhelmingly identified their sensitivity to culture and need for support in each gatekeeping phase. These themes remained interwoven throughout each phase and affected participants' gatekeeping perceptions. After careful analysis of the second round of interviews, support emerged as the dominant theme. Additionally, cultural sensitivity evolved as a secondary theme.

Pre-Admission Screening Phase

The first phase of the gatekeeping process, identified as pre-admissions screening, entailed prospective students submitting an application with test scores, recommendation letters, and personal statements. The first phase also included an interview with faculty

members, role play vignettes, and writing samples. All seven participants overwhelmingly identified support throughout the second round of interviews. Specifically, in the pre-admission screening phase, Stacy and Alan described the importance of communicating with fellow faculty members.

Stacy I definitely feel that my colleagues are part of my team, and I am part of their team. We make admission decisions together and support from my colleagues is essential at the very beginning of the admissions process. For instance, when a student is not accepted into the program, it isn't just an individual decision, it is a team decision.

Alan In the early phase of admission, the physical grunt work support is needed from peers. The work of reviewing, interviewing, admitting, etc., has to be done. That is when I need my folks to be present and participate.

Cultural awareness was crucial during the pre-admissions phase. In order to reflect the society at large, CACREP and other governing entities encouraged the recruitment of minorities and underserved populations. Alan and Nedra discussed how their departments addressed multicultural awareness during this phase.

Alan If diverse populations are not represented within the faculty and student body, then we are likely to act from a culturally encapsulated position.

Nedra Because we address multicultural awareness during the intense individual interview, we don't have to remediate in this area often.

Post-Admission Screening Phase

The post-admissions phase included measures to evaluate students' academic and interpersonal performance once enrolled in a master's-level counseling program. Post-admission screening procedures included academic aptitude and interpersonal interaction performance criteria. Stacy, Nate, and Alan concurred that support is necessary when issues arise with students who are currently enrolled in their programs.

- Stacy* When a student is having difficulty then we discuss this student as a team and suggest remediation activities. This process will continue until the student graduates.
- Nate* It is important for my department chair to support me when I need to deal with students who are not meeting academic, clinical, professional, and interpersonal expectations because support provides legitimacy to my actions.
- Alan* I need wise counsel and good sounding boards when I am dealing with problem students and seeking solutions. I have that with my colleagues.

With respect to culture, Nate and Nedra identified the post-admissions phase as an area where multicultural competence should be demonstrated.

- Nate* Students must demonstrate multicultural competence when they are completing their clinicals. I would pursue remediation if they were unable to.
- Nedra* Valuing and respecting diversity are components of many of our courses, so we are able to see development in this area throughout the duration that students are with us.

Remediation Plan Phase

The remediation plan phase consisted of two components including intensified supervision and personal development. Students who are undergoing intensified supervision may be required to provide additional tapes, meet for individual supervision, repeat coursework, be reassigned to another faculty member, or consent to a contract. Personal development entailed taking a leave of absence or undergoing personal counseling. Alan and Helen identified the remediation process as an area where support is necessary.

- Alan* When I have students who are in need of remediation, then I need emotional support from my colleagues. Remediation interventions can be hard on both the student and faculty members involved.
- Helen* If we need to remediate or dismiss a student, we stay in constant

contact with colleagues and university officials to determine the level of support necessary.

Five participants made general comments about their need for support and described their thoughts about how support influenced all stages of the gatekeeping process. These findings concurred with Baldo et al.'s (1997) recommendation to utilize a faculty committee or group when gatekeeping issues arise.

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| <i>Nate</i> | I believe support is needed particularly during phase two [post-admissions phase] and phase three [remediation phase] because important decisions are being made. Consultation needs to occur during these times. Additionally, support from my colleagues will also provide defensible grounds in cases of litigation. |
| <i>Alan</i> | I think the need of collegial support varies from situation to situation but it is certainly necessary. |
| <i>Wendy</i> | I have learned that it is much better to address issues with a team approach. Decisions should be made by program committees so no one person is in the hot seat for student reactions. |
| <i>Nedra</i> | Support from my colleagues and university is essential. I am fortunate to work in a program where my colleagues are supportive. We meet formally and informally on a regular basis, which enables us to talk about potential issues because they become major problems. We value each other's opinions and make decisions collaboratively. The university also allows us a great deal of autonomy which is helpful. All in all, support is crucial at every stage of the gatekeeping process, with no one stage being more important than another. |
| <i>Fred</i> | Support is important and should be present at every part of the gatekeeping process. Without a sense of cooperation, the whole system is threatened. |

In conclusion, participants overwhelmingly identified the need for support during specific phases in the gatekeeping process including pre-admissions, post-admissions, remediation plan, and remediation performance and provided general comments on why support is necessary. Additionally, cultural sensitivity remained a theme during the

second round of interviews as participants reflected on how their respect for diversity permeates the three identified phases of the gatekeeping model.

Summary of Round Two Interviews

As participants reflected on the second round of questions, initial themes and constructs were clarified and new properties emerged. Participants' responses were organized into the existing conceptualization which consisted of three phases (pre-admissions screening, post-admissions screening, and remediation plan) and two dominant themes (cultural sensitivity and support). Based on the analysis of the second round of interviews, the third phase (remediation plan) was renamed "remediation" and information regarding evaluation of remediation plans was presented. Additionally, support and cultural sensitivity remained themes that were inextricably linked to the gatekeeping conceptualization. Based on participants' responses to the gatekeeping phases, support prevailed as the dominant theme while cultural sensitivity remained secondary.

This conceptualization represents counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process based on the phases and themes that were identified, developed, and enhanced during two rounds of individual interviews. Questions for the third round were formulated to expand upon the existing model, to elaborate on the identified themes, and to elicit ideas for a title of the model.

Third Round of Individual Interviews

The questions included in the third round of interviews were developed after analysis of data from the first two rounds of data collection. The intent of the third round of interviews was to further elucidate new themes and confirm existing themes regarding counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process. Specifically, questions were devised to confirm and

expand the existing gatekeeping phases and themes as identified by participants of this investigation. The third round of interview questions included:

1. After reviewing the three phases of the model that have emerged from your responses, please reflect on your experiences and comment on your thoughts and reactions to each phase of the model. Please feel free to clarify or change any sections. As you can see, Phase Four is new and was developed after the second round of interviews. Some participants indicated that a final stage was necessary in order for students to move past remediation. Based on your experiences with students, please describe successful or unsuccessful remediation outcomes. Once students have been remediated and continue along in your program, how do you monitor them? What is your procedure when remediation proves ineffective?
3. It seems that support has emerged as a dominant theme. What do you mean by support? Who is your support? When do you need support? How do you want to be supported? Additionally, culture has evolved as a secondary theme. How do you define culture? In regard to culture, what area of this model causes the most anxiety for counselor educators? How do support and culture affect and influence one another?
4. A four phase model with related themes has emerged from your responses. Based on your cognitive and emotional responses to this process, what are your ideas for a name for this model?

The third round of interviews was initiated and completed by electronic mail. Two follow-up electronic mails were sent as reminders and encouraged participants to continue with the research. Six participants responded to the third round of questions

within two weeks. Two participants, Vicki and Fred, did not respond and were eliminated from the study.

Results of Third Round Interviews

Information collected during the third round of interviews was organized into the existing conceptualization and was therefore integrated into the initial three phases that reflected counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process. Coding procedures were used to expand existing categories, illuminate current properties, and identify new properties that provide details about each category. In summary, participant responses from the third round of questions served to verify information obtained from the first two interviews. Participants' responses continued to emphasize the three phases of the gatekeeping process and the interwoven themes. Participants also examined the fourth phase [remediation performance]. Participants confirmed and verified findings related to the first and third phases. Participants elaborated and expanded on information in the second and fourth phases. Additionally, support and cultural sensitivity continued to be primary and secondary themes, respectively.

Pre-Admission Screening Phase

Participants confirmed and verified findings from the two previous interviews. No new information was obtained.

Post-Admission Screening Phase

Academic Aptitude

The post-admissions screening process entailed evaluation of academic criteria. Nedra explained that academic coursework should be separated into two categories: academic performance for course work other than skills, and skills performance.

Nedra Coursework can be telling but it is important to differentiate skills courses and all other coursework. Students might do well in counseling courses but their skills are lacking. Therefore, students' skills need to be evaluated in related skills classes as well as practicum and internship.

Interpersonal Interaction

Nedra emphasized that students should be able to demonstrate multicultural competence during their practicum and internship experiences as well as professional behaviors and counseling skills.

Nedra We need to ensure that counseling students demonstrate appropriate behaviors at their practicum and internship sites. These behaviors include multicultural competence, professional and ethical decision making, and a range of counseling skills.

Figure 7 depicts amendments to phase two (post-admissions) that resulted from the third round of questions and includes Nedra's responses.

Remediation Plan

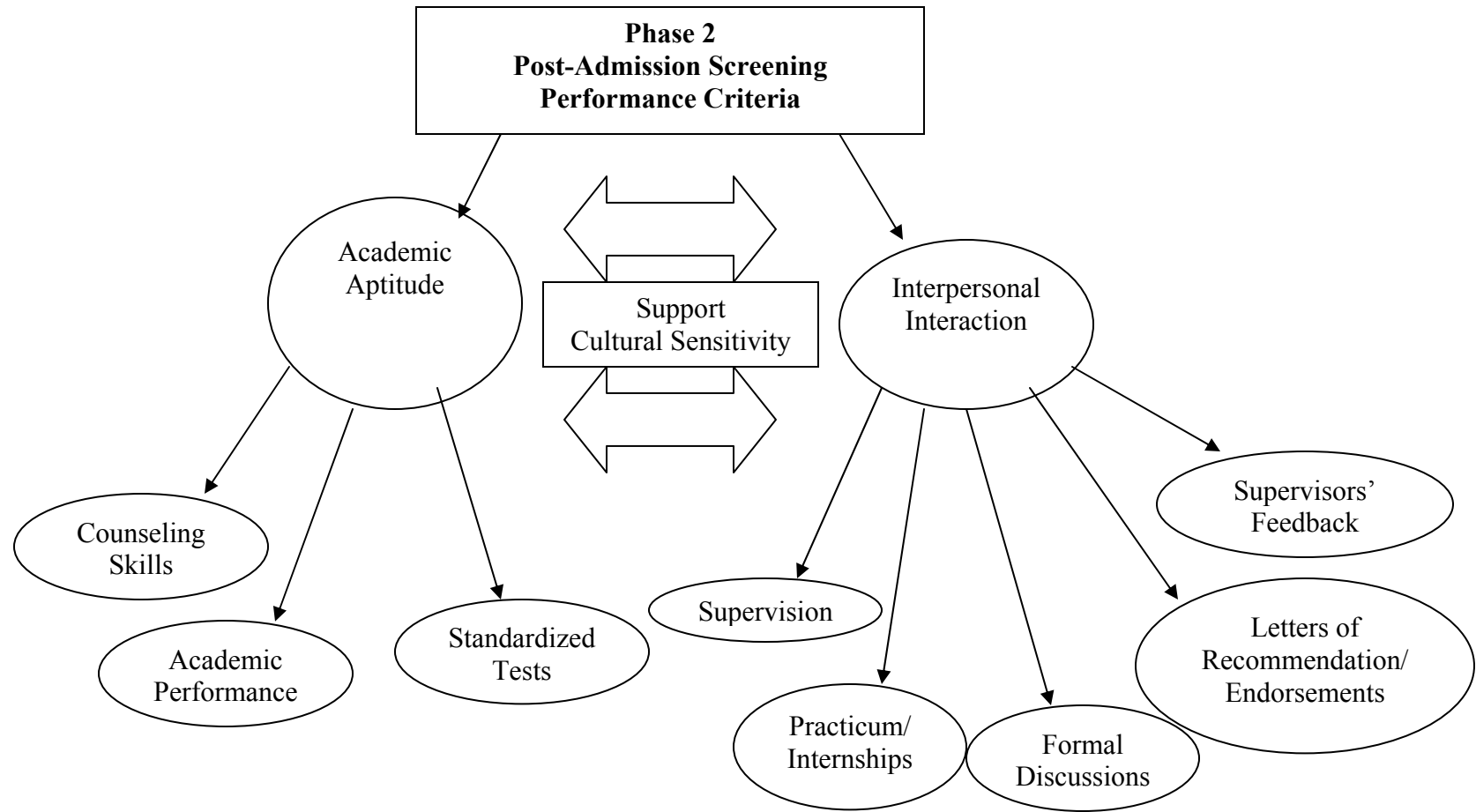
Participants confirmed and verified findings from the two previous interviews. No new information was obtained.

Remediation Outcome

Phase four was added after participants responded to questions in the third round of interviews regarding Fred's concern for remediation efficacy. Phase four was designed to include an additional step in order to evaluate the assigned remediation. Nate commented that the phase should be renamed "Remediation Outcome." After analyzing the data obtained from the third round of interviews, I concurred with Nate. Phase four includes three outcome stages deemed: (a) successful (b) unsuccessful, and (c) indifferent or neutral.

Figure 7

Third Round of Data Analysis – Follow-up Email Correspondance



Participants remarked that students have experienced successful remediation. Successful remediation pertains to situations when students complete the assigned remediation by following the appropriate procedures or instructions and present with a notable change. As a result, the students have continued in their program. Four participants discussed their positive experiences with successful remediation.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| <i>Nedra</i> | I had to delay some students from starting their practicum because they had not demonstrated the requisite counseling skills. They did not begin at their sites until after they had completed videos demonstrating the needed skills. These students both ended up demonstrating high levels of competence and now are successful professional counselors. |
| <i>Helen</i> | Successful remediation for us includes having students retake the skills course or their comprehensive examination. These students were eventually successful, it just took them a bit longer than the rest. |
| <i>Alan</i> | All interventions that I have utilized with students have been successful. Students either adjust the inappropriate behavior or move to a different program of study. |
| <i>Wendy</i> | I had a student who was quite bright but she exhibited impulsiveness that made for some unprofessional behavior and use of poor judgment. We requested that she attend regular counseling for the remainder of the program. Two years post graduation, she is experiencing considerable improvement in her personal and professional life. Although it was difficult, we were able to plant some seeds that are now blossoming. |

Often, remediation can prove to be unsuccessful. Unsuccessful remediation situations occur when students do not complete remediation or complete remediation but without a noticeable change. When remediation is unsuccessful, participants identified that students either are dismissed, self-select out or leave the program, or undergo career advisement.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| <i>Helen</i> | Students who do not improve after repeating a course or fail their comprehensive examination more than once are dismissed from the program. |
| <i>Nate</i> | If remediation proved unsuccessful, the case is presented to the |

dean and subsequently to the graduate school with the recommendation of dismissal.

Wendy I've had students self-select themselves out of the program once they have been remediated. They are not too invested and see that the field is not for them. The best case scenario is to have students decide for themselves.

Alan If remediation proves unsuccessful, I've met with students and advised them to take a look at counseling positions that are suited for them. For example, some students would do well working for a managed care company as opposed to being on the front line like a school counselor.

Participants also commented on indifferent or neutral outcomes to remediation.

This occurred when remediation attempts yield marginal results. They expressed ambivalent feelings about having students improve only marginally in remediated areas.

Wendy A young woman did well throughout the program although it was evident what she was immature and naïve. She was overwhelmed at her internship site, had a sense of entitlement, and fought profusely with her principal. We required additional supervision in the form of tapes and provided additional individual and group supervision. Developmentally, she was not at the point we needed her to be. We did graduate her. Nobody felt good about graduating her but we were unsure how to speed up her developmental progress.

Nate We can assign a remediation plan to students who may only marginally improve. If they complete what has been assigned, how can we still hold them back? It will reflect in their letters of recommendation and it will be obvious to employers, I hope.

Stacy identified that she also experienced neutral outcomes to remediation. Additionally, she discussed individual and institutional liability involving indifferent remediation outcomes.

Stacy I often wonder about individual and institutional liability when students have graduated and there are still questions about their competence. It is quite embarrassing when my graduates are inappropriate and incompetent on the job. But, I wonder if the incompetence will come back to haunt me.

Stacy's concern over liability is supported by the literature and supports the rationale for this investigation. A suit filed against Louisiana Tech University argued that a student graduated

without sufficient training and that the program had an obligation to the public to ensure the person graduating was competent in the area in which the degree was granted (Custer, 1994).

In conclusion, phase four (remediation outcome) was introduced and explained after the third round of interviews. Participants confirmed and elaborated on their experiences of remediation outcomes. Additionally, individual and institutional liability were identified as concerns when remediation outcomes were indifferent. Figure 8 serves as a visual representation of remediation outcomes.

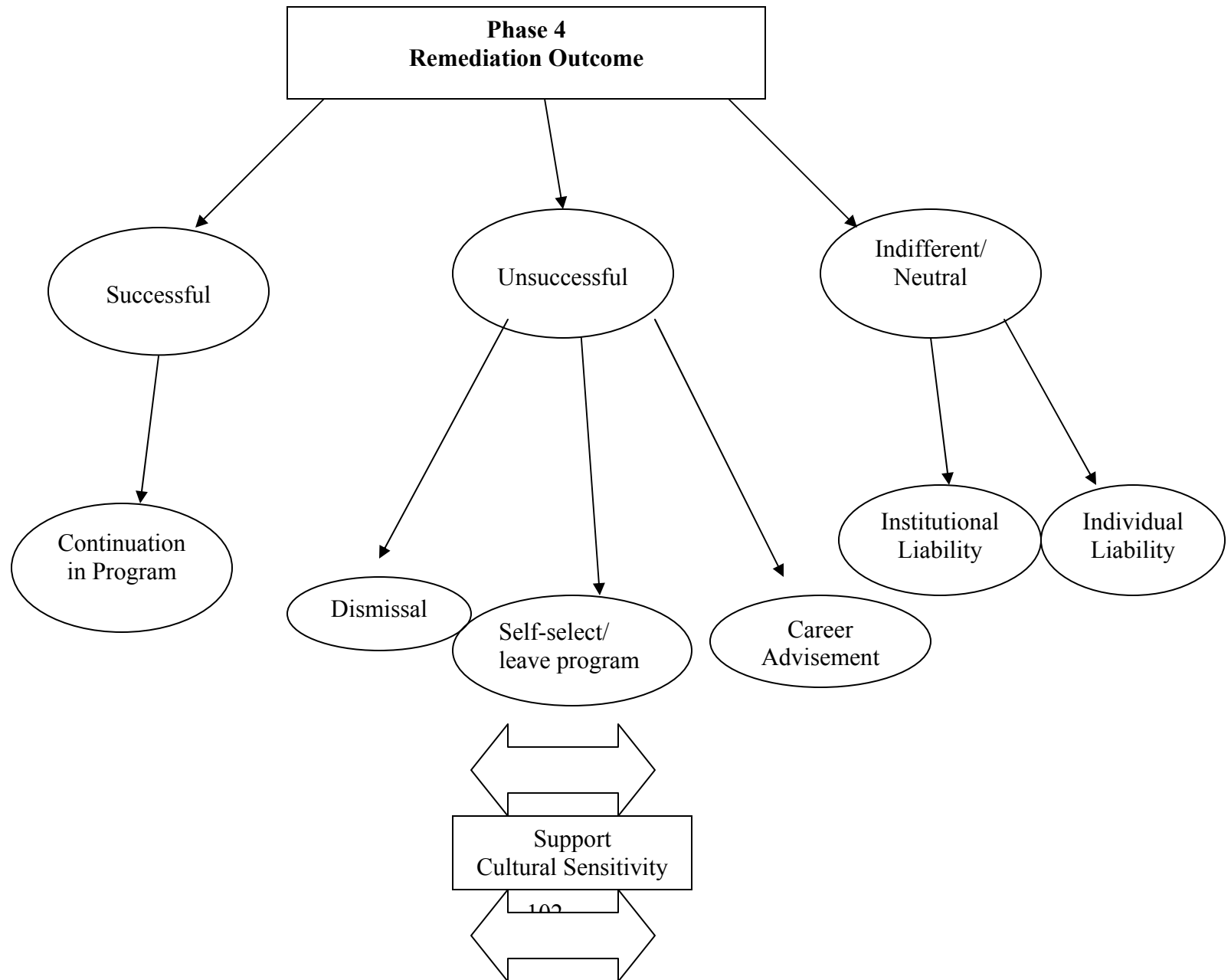
Related Themes

As stated earlier, two prominent themes emerged from the first round of interviews and were elaborated on during subsequent interviews. These themes were: (a) cultural sensitivity and (b) support. For the purposes of this research, cultural sensitivity was defined as participants' awareness, knowledge, and skills when supervising, instructing, and evaluating students from diverse backgrounds. Participants also reported that support from their colleagues and university is integral throughout the gatekeeping process. After careful analysis of the second round of interviews, support emerged as the dominant theme. Cultural sensitivity evolved as a secondary theme. These themes were verified during the third round of individual interviews and participants elaborated on their significance.

Support was identified in the first round of interviews and evolved during the subsequent interviews. Participants overwhelmingly concurred that support was necessary when gatekeeping. Because support is a broad term, participants were asked to identify what they meant by support and to elaborate on how they want to be supported. Participants agreed that their relationships with each other were pivotal.

Figure 8

Third Round of Data Analysis – Follow-up Email Correspondance



- Nate* When I am having problems with a student, I need departmental and institutional support. I have given support to my colleagues when they require a student to undergo remediation.
- Alan* My department head is very supportive. I also have a faculty mentor who is supportive. Other faculty members in different disciplines are also imperative to call on for wisdom and support. I can always receive honest but caring feedback from these people.
- Wendy* I will seek out co-workers in and out of the program to process situations and help develop strategies. I have excellent support in the program and in the department.
- Nedra* Among our faculty, we respect each other. We take time and consult with one another and regularly meet to discuss issues before they become major.
- Helen* Support involves backing up the decision of a faculty member who suggests remediation and having faith in that person.

Support was also identified as existing between the institution and faculty members.

- Nate* As long as remediation is justified and documentation exists, our dean of the college or the graduate schools would not override the faculty's decision.
- Helen* It is best to get support from the dean and others before any remediation decision is made. The dean is aware of our remediation plans and backs us up.

Additionally, support also existed between faculty members and students. Nate and Nedra discussed their relationships with students.

- Nate* If remediation needs to occur, it is necessary that students understand the actions taken by the faculty are based on concern for the student, profession, and the clients they will serve. Faculty members also need to be supportive of the efforts students make to complete the remediation requirements.
- Nedra* Support between faculty members and students is evidenced by our accessibility. We have a small program that truly puts students first. Our evaluations show that students greatly value us.

Nedra described the importance of relationships among the students. Cohorts provided support when students are having difficulties academically and personally

Nedra Each new cohort develops strong relationships with one another. This is evidenced by their involvement with intramural sports, hosting informal socials, and maintaining contact.

A secondary theme that remained consistent throughout the development of this process was participants' consideration of culture. Participants were asked to define culture and explain how it related to gatekeeping.

Alan A total way of behaving that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions. This can be any grouping of people around any theme of gender, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. When gatekeeping, cultural worldviews can come into play and an element of unacknowledged privilege or oppression may be present in the relationship.

Wendy I define culture by looking at the dominant group and the opposing group. We have difficulty recruiting and retaining racial minority students. This is mostly due in part to our rural location and lack of ethnic diversity. One of our biggest problems is when students bring religious fervor to the program. It makes our job even harder. I regularly assess our policies and practices to ensure that we are being as proactive and supportive of diversity as possible. Our students provide regular, anonymous feedback to assist us.

Helen Cultural competence involves students being able to counsel a diverse clientele. It is important that students learn to be tolerant of clients who may hold different values. Multicultural competence is critical when students are working out in the field and this causes a lot of anxiety for counselor educators.

Stacy I look for individual culture rather than making assumptions on the individual's membership in a certain group. I make gatekeeping decisions based on student behaviors.

Nate Gatekeeping issues with students may be due to cultural differences. Students should not be blamed for behaviors which are culturally based. However, if a behavior is not acceptable and in accordance with established standards of conduct, then the students need to be oriented as to why the behavior is unacceptable. Compromise needs to be achieved in cases where differences are value based.

In regards to Nate's experience, Forrest et al. (1999) raised concerns about the potential influences of multicultural issues on gatekeeping. They contended that students' inappropriate behaviors may overlap with their cultural experiences, gender socialization, or religious beliefs, and that these experiences are not easily reversible. Therefore, it is imperative, as Nate stated, to practice cultural sensitivity when identifying behaviors and developing remediation plans.

In conclusion, participants overwhelmingly identified the need for support during all phases of the gatekeeping process including pre-admissions, post-admissions, remediation decision-making, and when assessing remediation outcomes. Cultural sensitivity remained a theme during the second round of interviews as participants reflected on their definition of culture and how they consider culture when gatekeeping.

Summary of Round Three Interviews

As participants reflected on the third round of questions, initial themes and constructs were clarified and new properties emerged. Participants' responses were organized into the existing conceptualization which consisted of four phases and a dominant and secondary theme. Additional information was added to phases two and four. The themes of support and cultural sensitivity remained interwoven throughout the four-phase gatekeeping process. Support remained dominant and most significant to the participants. Cultural sensitivity was viewed as relevant but secondary to support.

This theoretical conceptualization represents counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process based on the phases and themes that were identified, developed, and enhanced during three rounds of individual interviews.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The final stage of data analysis included conclusion drawing and verification procedures. These procedures served to enhance the trustworthiness of my interpretations of the research. The provisional conclusions were subjected to several verification procedures before they were presented as final conclusions. The verification methods that were used in this research included: (a) examining rival explanations and (b) utilizing triangulation procedures.

Rival Explanations

At each of the three stages of data analysis, I searched for alternative ways of organizing the data and actively sought rival explanations for emergent themes. I reviewed the literature included in chapter two and compared my initial findings with the existing research on gatekeeping. Several concepts that emerged from data analysis were addressed in the existing literature including academic and interpersonal evaluation criteria and gatekeeping procedures. Additionally, the issues of culture and support and their relatedness to gatekeeping were also cited in the literature. However, information regarding a gatekeeping process or model that included pre-admission and post-admission phases did not exist in the literature. Therefore, available literature could not be utilized to suggest alternative explanations for these findings.

In addition to utilizing a thorough literature review, I presented my initial findings to my peer debriefer. Peer debriefing allows the data to be believable and credible and adds to the confirmability of the interpretations and findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My peer debriefer assisted me in organizing the findings and detecting alternative explanations. Tentative findings

were eventually supported because neither I nor my peer debriefer detected any alternative explanations.

Triangulation Procedures

Triangulation is a process of collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings by using a variety of methods. This strategy reduces the risk of chance associations or systematic biases, and allows for a better examination of the explanations that the researcher develops (Maxwell, 1996). By utilizing several methods of data collection, conclusions can be deemed appropriate and accurate. For this study, triangulation procedures included the use of member checks, document reviews, and expert consultation.

Member Checks

Member checks involve sharing transcripts, analytical thoughts, and interpretations with the participants to ensure their ideas were recorded and represented accurately (Glesne, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I asked participants to review the preliminary findings and verify that their perceptions were represented accurately. Participants offered suggestions about the data and questioned some themes. Overall, the participants responded favorably to the findings and remarked that the conclusions reflected their perceptions of the gatekeeping process.

Document Reviews

Documents that pertain to the topic at hand can corroborate a researcher's observations and interviews, allow findings to be more trustworthy, and shape new directions for follow-up interviews (Glesne, 1999). Documents utilized in this study included student handbooks, program mission statements, and application packets. These documents were easily obtained via the internet. The documents were analyzed and evaluated for information pertaining to this study. These documents served as verification tools and confirmed participant responses regarding

gatekeeping procedures. It is important to note that the individual interviews expanded on the information listed in these documents. Document analysis added to the credibility of the findings and facilitated thoughts on additional interview questions.

Expert Consultation

Expert consultation served as the final verification procedure for this investigation. This was arranged with a co-chair of my dissertation committee who also served as my methodologist. She assisted with this research throughout data collection and analysis procedures. I presented results in the form of data displays from each round of individual interviews along with my tentative findings. Based on her perceptions of the data, she provided feedback on how to expand the tentative model. She offered several recommendations regarding order and detail and served to confirm my findings.

Each verification procedure utilized in this study served as a means for providing accurate and credible interpretations of initial findings and subsequent conclusions. Based on information gathered from three rounds of individual interviews, data analysis, and verification procedures, a conceptual framework was developed that reflected counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process.

Summary

This chapter presented findings that emerged from data collection and analysis. The findings were intended to answer the grand research question for this study: What are counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process? Participant profiles were created by utilizing demographic inventories, document reviews, personal observations, and reflexive journaling and highlighted characteristics of each participant. Various coding procedures were

used to systematize and present information obtained during the three rounds of individual interviews.

As a result of thorough data analysis, a theoretical framework was developed based on counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process. Participants were asked predetermined questions and their responses were analyzed in order to understand the themes that emerged. The information obtained during the three rounds of interviews produced a process of gatekeeping that included four phases and two interrelated themes. To enhance the understanding of this investigation, figures were constructed to depict the evolution of the model and related themes. Finally, verification procedures were explained in order to enhance the trustworthiness of this investigation.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter, the purpose of the study is restated, procedures and findings are summarized, and the theoretical framework that emerged regarding counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process is discussed. Limitations of this research and methods used to address these limitations are presented. Implications of findings for counselor educators, related educational programs, and governing entities are suggested. Finally, recommendations for further research are addressed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process in master's-level graduate programs. Specific questions included: (a) What are your experiences with gatekeeping and how do you describe the process? (b) What are your perceptions of the efficacy of gatekeeping? (c) What are your perceptions about how multiculturalism pertains to the gatekeeping process? and (d) What does the gatekeeping process entail for you, your program, and the institution where you are employed?

Methodology

The primary method of data collection consisted of three rounds of individual interviews with counselor educators who teach in master's-level CACREP-accredited counseling programs in the southeast region of the United States. Eight participants volunteered for the initial

interviews which occurred face-to-face. Due to participant dropout, six participants were involved in the follow-up interviews were conducted via electronic mail. The initial face-to-face interviews were audio taped and transcribed and the two subsequent electronic interviews were printed for the purpose of data analysis.

Initial interview questions were broad and general in order to elicit counselor educators' descriptions of their experiences and perceptions pertaining to the process of gatekeeping. Based on the data gathered from the initial interviews, questions for the second and third rounds of interviews were designed to broaden and elaborate on the emergent themes and to solicit new information. These interview questions were developed to expand the four-phase gatekeeping process that participants identified. Additionally, two themes emerged from the initial interview: (a) support and (b) cultural sensitivity. Questions were developed to address how these themes relate to the gatekeeping process.

Electronic interviews were conducted with questions that were formulated to confirm categories, broaden existing concepts, and explore new information that pertained to participants' perceptions of the gatekeeping process. Specifically, the final interview questions were formulated to verify the four phases of the gatekeeping process that participants identified, expand and reflect on the related themes of cultural sensitivity and support, and to elicit suggestions for a words and language that could explain the theoretical framework that emerged.

After each round of interviews, I utilized a series of open, axial, and selective coding procedures to identify themes. Open coding involved separating and categorizing the data into themes. This coding was accomplished by reviewing the transcripts several times and identifying quotes that answered specific research questions. Next, axial coding was used to link the categories and add depth and structure. Displays and matrices, also known as figures, were

developed during axial coding to offer visual representations of each category and property and to illustrate interactions among the categories. Finally, selective coding was incorporated to organize the categories around a central concept. This coding process illuminated four main categories and several properties that were used to describe participants' perceptions regarding the gatekeeping process in counselor education.

Findings were verified through the use of triangulation procedures that included member checks, a reflexive journal, consultation with a peer debriefer, and a review of documents. Throughout the entire process of data collection and analysis, I kept a detailed journal that reflected my observations and ideas pertaining to this study. My peer debriefer assisted me in keeping my subjectivity in check and regularly read my journal. Additionally, in an effort to establish trustworthiness, my peer debriefer reviewed the data collected from the participants, the analysis procedures, and the findings. Finally, document reviews were instrumental in verifying the data. Application packets, student handbooks, and websites were reviewed and analyzed. Review of these materials confirmed participant responses from the individual interviews.

Summary of Findings

A literature search revealed that research that focused on the gatekeeping process was extremely limited. Furthermore, qualitative inquiry had not been conducted from the perspective of counselor educators. This study explored counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process in master's-level CACREP-accredited counseling programs. From the findings, a theoretical conceptualization of gatekeeping emerged with four distinct phases that were continually influenced by support and cultural sensitivity.

Pre-Admissions Screening Phase

Based on participants' responses and a review of documents, the pre-admissions screening consisted of academic aptitude and interpersonal related criteria. Academic aptitude included undergraduate grade point average and test scores, criteria that are usually determined by the program and/or graduate school. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and the Miller's Analogy Test (MAT) are most often utilized to attain additional information regarding an applicant's academic performance. Recommendation letters are also required and carefully examined. Additional education is considered if applicants already possess an advanced degree or if they have studied in another area such as business or communications. Prior work experience is encouraged, but not required. Programs often inquire as to whether applicants have worked with children and/or adults before obtaining an advanced degree in counseling. Finally, a personal statement is usually submitted along with an application. The personal statement addresses applicants' goals for a degree in counseling and plans after graduation.

Once applicants had met the academic criteria set forth by the department and university, interpersonal criteria were explored through several methods. Interviews were usually conducted in individual or group formats and were facilitated by students and/or faculty. The interviews consisted of role-plays, specific questioning, and submitting a writing sample. Role plays could be "live" with a pretend client and observed by the faculty members or summarized in narrative form by the pseudo client. Or, they could be videotaped and reviewed after the interviews had been conducted. Finally, writing samples were submitted during an interview. Applicants were asked to write a critique of an article or respond to a case study.

Post-Admission Screening Phase

Participants revealed that evaluation measures continued after students are admitted into their graduate programs. Students are measured again on academic aptitude and interpersonal criteria. Academic aptitude consisted of grades, standardized test scores, and development of specific counseling skills. Interpersonal criteria included interactions during supervision, practicum and internships, and formal discussions.

According to participants, while students are enrolled in counseling graduate programs, passing grades of A or B need to be maintained. The grade of C is usually not acceptable, and remedial work is assigned. Once the remedial work is completed, the grade will be changed to B. Towards the end of the graduate program, students are required to pass a standardized test. In order to evaluate students' academic acumen, most programs utilize the NCE Comprehensive Test, the counseling portion of the PRAXIS, or a program-developed comprehensive examination.

Furthermore, participants considered the skills class to be imperative when evaluating students' academic performance. Students' counseling skills were further evaluated during the practicum and internship experiences. One participant, Nedra, explained that "students must demonstrate successful counseling techniques in the skills class. Later on, students should again demonstrate these skills in their practicum and internships."

Interpersonal interaction performance criteria examined how students interact with faculty members, site supervisors, and their peers. Participants noted that interpersonal interactions during supervision, practicum and internship experiences, and formal discussions with professors often reveal personality characteristics that would be missed if grades and test scores were the only methods of post-admission screening. As graduation approaches, students

often request letters of recommendation or endorsements from faculty members. Students' culminating experiences, academic and interpersonal, are often described in these letters of endorsement. Participants elaborated on the detail in these letters which depended on the academic and interpersonal acumen of the student.

Remediation Phase

According to participants, remediation plans were developed when students were presenting with an academic or personal limitation. Remediation plans typically consisted of two components that included intensified supervision and personal development. These findings are consistent with the ACA Code of Ethics (1995), specifically standard F.3.a., which states:

Counselors assist students and supervisees in securing remedial assistance when needed, and dismiss from the training program supervisees who are unable to provide competent services due to academic or personal limitations.

Participants indicated that intensified supervision included producing and providing additional counseling tapes, attending additional supervision sessions, or repeating coursework. Alternatively, students were assigned another faculty member to serve as their advisor or supervisor. Often, a contract was formulated that listed specific behaviors that needed to improve or assignments required to be completed. Personal development was another remediation strategy that entailed students taking a leave of absence, participating in required counseling, or being advised to explore other careers.

The findings presented in this section are consistent with Corey, Haynes, and Moulton's (2003) recommendation to utilize several types of remediation including increased supervision, a leave of absence, personal counseling, and additional coursework. These findings also are congruent with CACREP's "2001 Standards," specifically Section II.F., that states "when evaluations indicate that a student is not appropriate for the program, counseling faculty should

assist in facilitating the student's transition out of the program, and if possible, into a more appropriate area of study" (CACREP, 2000).

Remediation Outcome Phase

After the third round of interviews, a fourth phase which included the outcome of the remediation plans was added to the initial three-phase framework which included the outcomes of the remediation plans. Based on Fred's experiences, he explained that "A fourth phase needs to be added." After presenting this finding to the participants, all agreed that an "outcome" piece would be beneficial. "If students do not agree to remediation or if remediation attempts prove ineffective, then a program must dismiss or terminate the student." The remediation outcomes were categorized as successful, unsuccessful, and indifferent or neutral.

Participants indicated that successful remediation allows students to continue in the program. When remediation is unsuccessful, participants commented that students are dismissed, self-select out or leave the program, or undergo career advisement. Finally, participants identified indifferent outcomes when students only improve marginally. One participant in particular experienced indifferent outcomes to remediation plans and discussed concerns regarding individual and institutional liability. The participant's concern with liability is supported by the literature and affirms the rationale for this investigation. A suit filed against Louisiana Tech University argued that a student graduated without sufficient training and that the program had an obligation to the public to ensure the person graduating was competent in the area in which the degree was granted (Custer, 1994).

Related Themes

Participants identified their need for support from colleagues and university personnel. They considered themselves to be a part of "a team" and want to be "on the same page" with

their colleagues. Participants indicated that they lean on colleagues from their department, including their department head, but also communicate with colleagues from other disciplines, the dean's office, graduate school, and university attorneys. Furthermore, participants stated that they meet formally on a regular basis to discuss program policies and on an informal basis to address emergent issues. Fred summarized his experience by stating, "Support is important and should be present at every part of the gatekeeping process. Without a sense of cooperation, the whole system is threatened."

Participants stated that staffings or evaluation meetings can be conducted when academic or interpersonal issues arise with students. This finding supports Baldo et al.'s (1997) recommendation for utilizing a faculty review committee in which faculty members may identify and report a particular student's progress without becoming the target of the student's reaction.

Throughout this investigation, participants also identified cultural sensitivity as present in the gatekeeping process. Cultural sensitivity was defined as participants' awareness, knowledge, and skills when supervising, instructing, and evaluating students from diverse backgrounds. Participants identified the need for cultural sensitivity for both the counselor educator and the student throughout the duration of a student's enrollment. From the perspective of the counselor educator, participants desire and attempt to recruit a diverse student population. While the student is enrolled, participants remarked that it is imperative for both to be aware of their biases. If remediation is necessary and graduation may be jeopardized, Helen commented that: "We cannot deny graduation to people when they have invested money and time based on a personal bias." Forrest et al. (1999) contended that students will be more open to acknowledging their limitations if cultural sensitivity is inherent in the development of remediation plans. Furthermore, participants want to graduate diverse and culturally competent students who will be

reflective of society. Alan addressed this globally by stating, “If diverse populations are not represented within the faculty and student body, then we are likely to act from a culturally encapsulated position.”

In terms of multicultural sensitivity on the part of the student, participants stated that they want students to present with multicultural awareness during the interview process. As the student moves along in the program, multicultural awareness must be present during classes, practicum, internships, and supervision. Participants also wanted students to develop positive relationships with peers from different backgrounds.

After an exhaustive data collection and analysis process, information obtained from participants produced a four-phase gatekeeping theoretical conceptualization that includes pre-admissions screening, post-admission screening, remediation plan, and remediation outcome. Cultural sensitivity and support emerged as interrelated themes interwoven throughout each phase of the gatekeeping process.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include issues related to: (a) researcher’s bias, (b) researcher’s lack of experience, and (c) participant dropout. Because qualitative researchers serve as the instrument for data collection, it was imperative for me to practice awareness of my biases. From the beginning of this research endeavor, I openly stated my assumptions and biases. In order to address this limitation and strengthen the credibility of my findings, I utilized triangulation procedures which included using multiple methods of data collection. These methods included individual interviews, document reviews, and personal observations. I also recorded my personal thoughts, observations, and biases in a reflexive journal. I shared this journal with my peer

debriefers and utilized member checks to ensure that the findings were consistent with participants' responses.

Furthermore, I provided a detailed description of my data collection and analysis procedures so that researchers can replicate this study. Although generalizability is not a goal of qualitative research, it should also be noted that responses from the eight participants might not be reflective of all counselor education programs. Another limitation entails only utilizing participants from counselor education programs located only in the south-east region of the United States.

Other limitations of this study included my lack of qualitative research experience and lack of experience related to being a counselor educator. The research design, research questions, and related probes that were developed were affected by this lack of experience. Furthermore, two participants withdrew from this study and did not respond to the follow-up email requests. However, the majority of the conceptual framework was developed after the first round of interviews in which all eight participants were interviewed and their responses were tabulated.

A final limitation included relying on electronic email for the second and third rounds. Since participants wrote their responses to my questions, there may have been some dissonance between what they had experienced and what they wrote about the gatekeeping process. Also, the use of qualitative interview techniques such as probing and attending to non-verbal cues was not possible because of utilizing electronic mail.

Implications

The results of this investigation provide a theoretical conceptualization based on counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process. The findings of this investigation

are grounded in the perceptions and experiences of counselor educators who teach in master's-level CACREP-accredited counseling programs in the southeast region of the United States. Implications for counselor education programs, related educational programs and disciplines, CACREP, and ACA are presented.

Counselor Education Programs and Related Disciplines

Counselor education programs and related disciplines may benefit from this research in many ways. Based on participants' responses regarding the gatekeeping process, a four phase process was identified. Programs can utilize this conceptualization to develop a model or incorporate parts of the identified process into their gatekeeping practices. The models presented in previous literature begin the gatekeeping process when a problem occurs with a student and remediation is necessary. The process that emerged from this research is unique in that the conceptualization is more comprehensive in nature. It begins before students are admitted into their graduate programs and offers two interrelated themes [support and multicultural sensitivity] to consider. Related educational disciplines that may also benefit from this research may include social work, counseling psychology, nursing, and medical programs as these programs involve interpersonal contact with others.

CACREP and ACA

The process that emerged from this research adheres to the CACREP standards that outline program development and student monitoring and retention. This process could assist CACREP in accreditation and program development decisions. Counselor educators are asked not to endorse students for certification, licensure, employment, or completion of an academic program if they believe students are not qualified for the endorsement (ACA Code of Ethics, 1995, Standard F.1.h). Additionally, ACA could examine this research and incorporate

components that are aligned with their ethical codes, specifically the pre-admissions and post-admissions phases which occur before a problem arises and remediation is necessary. Both CACREP and ACA standards address gatekeeping; therefore, findings offered in this research may be utilized to further refine and revise these standards. Furthermore, pre-admissions and post-admissions procedures can be examined and, if appropriate, incorporated in the revisions.

Suggestions for Further Research

To date, gatekeeping models and survey results have been presented in the literature. However, a qualitative component that explores the gatekeeping phenomenon from the perspective of counselor educators has been missing from the body of knowledge. Forrest (1999) noted that qualitative methods for studying impairment issues offer great appeal, given the limited number of cases, and that grounded theory would be useful in developing and generating a theory on impairment issues.

Because this is the first qualitative study addressing gatekeeping and involving counselor educators, additional research is necessary. Future qualitative studies could expand on this research and could include CACREP-accredited programs beyond the southeast region of the United States. Additionally, through qualitative inquiry, phases within the theoretical conceptualization and related themes could be further developed and expanded.

Based upon the findings of this qualitative endeavor, quantitative methods could be utilized to address how gatekeeping procedures may differ in master's and doctoral programs. Also, the process of gatekeeping could be explored in CACREP-accredited and non-accredited counselor education programs. Finally, a survey based on the information gathered from this

research could be developed and utilized in order to assess gatekeeping procedures in numerous CACREP-accredited counseling programs.

Conclusion

This research endeavor evolved from my interests in legal and ethical issues in counselor education and supervision. When I began to research these areas, it was apparent that exploratory research was lacking and that the experiences of counselor educators had been neglected in the literature. By utilizing qualitative methodology, specifically grounded theory procedures, I was able to illuminate my participants' descriptions of a four-phase comprehensive gatekeeping process. With the support and encouragement of my professors, I had the honor to be the first to explore this phenomenon through qualitative inquiry.

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APPENDIX A

Approval from Human Subjects Committee

*University Committee for the Protection
of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans*

Form Number: 5AUG04

(please refer to this number in all future correspondence concerning this protocol)

Principal Investigator Jolie Ziomek Daigle **Title:** Graduate student

Faculty Supervisor: Teresa Christensen/Barbara Herlihy *(if PI is a student)*

Department: Educational Administration,
Counseling, and foundations **College:** Education

Project Title: Counselor educators' perspectives of the gatekeeping process

Date Reviewed: 7/28/04

Dates of Proposed Project Period From 8/04 to 5/05

**approval is for one year from approval date only and may be renewed yearly.*

Note: Consent forms and related materials are to be kept by the PI for a period of three years following the completion of the study.

Approval Status

Date

☐ Full Committee Approval

☐ Expedited Approval

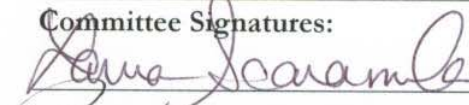
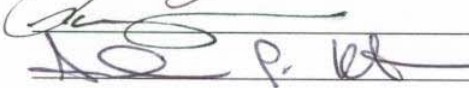
☐ Continuation

☒ Rejected

☒ The protocol will be approved following receipt of satisfactory response(s) to the following question(s) within 15 days:

Protection of confidentiality & anonymity.

Committee Signatures:

Laura Scaramella, Ph.D. (Chair)

Pamela Jenkins, Ph.D.

Anthony Kontos, Ph.D.

Betty Lo, M.D.

Richard B. Speaker, Ph.D.



Gary Talarchek, Ph.D.

L. Allen Witt, Ph.D.

APPENDIX B

Introduction Letter



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP,
COUNSELING, AND FOUNDATIONS

August 30, 2004

Dear Potential Research Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of New Orleans. I am requesting your assistance in helping me conduct my dissertation research. My study pertains to counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process. Although gatekeeping models exist in the literature, researchers have not explored this phenomenon from the perspective of counselor educators. Therefore, I hope to interview master's-level counselor educators who have three or more years experience in terms of their gatekeeping perceptions. This information will be used to develop a theoretical conceptualization and provide information related to a model for gatekeeping to the counseling community.

Participants for my research will voluntarily participate in three individual interviews and one concluding focus group. The initial interview will take place face to face and last 60-90 minutes. The other two individual interviews will be conducted via telephone or email. The concluding interview will involve a focus group experience in which participants will be presented with the findings of this investigation and asked to share their impressions about such findings. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary.

I believe that sharing your experiences and perceptions will make a valuable contribution to this research. I hope that you will choose to take part in this study. I look forward to hearing from you within the next week should you decide to participate. At that time, we can schedule a convenient time for your initial interview. If I have not heard from you by August 15, then I will follow up with a telephone call to determine your decision of whether to participate in this research. Please contact me at any time should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jolie Ziomek Daigle
Doctoral Candidate
University of New Orleans
Phone: (504) 451-4281
E-Mail: JolieDaigle@aol.com

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

1. Title of Research Study

Counselor Educators' Perceptions of the Gatekeeping Process

2. Project Director

Jolie Ziomek Daigle, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA 70148. Telephone (504) 451-4281. Email Address: JolieDaigle@aol.com

I am under the supervision of Drs. Teresa Christensen and Barbara Herlihy, Professors, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations, (504) 280-6661

3. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to explore counselor educators' perceptions of the gatekeeping process. This information will be used to build a theoretical framework about the unique aspects of gatekeeping.

4. Procedures for this Research

Participants will be asked to voluntarily participate in three individual interviews and one concluding focus group. The initial interview will take place face to face and will last 60-90 minutes. The other two individual interviews will be conducted via telephone or electronic-mail. Interviews conducted in person and via telephone will be audio taped and transcribed for data analysis. The interview conducted via electronic-mail will be printed for analysis purposes and the contact information will be deleted for purposes of confidentiality. All audio tapes will be erased upon completion and verification of transcripts. A concluding focus group will also be conducted and audio taped as well. Participation in the focus group is voluntary; you may choose to participate in the three interviews but not the focus group. Since anonymity cannot be protected during the focus group a statement will be read at the beginning of the group reminding all participants that everything discussed during the group is confidential, including those who attend this group.

5. Potential Risks or Discomforts

Due to the nature of this research, there are no identifiable risks to participants except possible violations of anonymity. Anonymity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms, deleting all identifiable information, and securing data materials. All aspects of participation are voluntary and participants may choose to conclude the interview at any time. If you would like to discuss these or other potential risks, you may contact me or my supervisors listed in Part #2 of this form.

6. Potential Benefits to You or Others

Since this research will contribute to a theoretical model of gatekeeping, the results of this research could be used to assist counselor educators and supervisors in understanding the gatekeeping process and practice.

7. Alternative Procedures

There are no alternative procedures. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence.

8. Protection of Confidentiality

Your name, university and all affiliations will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be given to participants and coded in the transcripts. Your name will not be identified on the audio tapes. All audio tapes will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, who will sign a confidentiality agreement, or by the Project Director. The signed consent, audio tapes, interview transcripts, and all other materials related to this study will be kept in a secure and confidential manner by the Project Director. Dissertation committee members including Drs. Teresa Christensen, Barbara Herlihy, Ted Remley, Louis Paradise, and Vivian McCollum will have access to the transcripts, if they chose to review them. Dissertation committee members will only have access to pseudonyms and not participants' identification information to ensure anonymity.

9. Signatures

I have been informed of the above-described procedure with its possible benefits and risks and I have given permission of participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Name of Participant (Print)

Date

Signature of Project Director

Name of Project Director

Date

APPENDIX D

Initial Interview Protocol

Counselor Educators' Perceptions
of the Gatekeeping Process

SAMPLE QUESTIONS
for
INITIAL INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

1. How would you define gatekeeping and its purpose?
2. What are your experiences in gatekeeping and how do you describe the process?
3. What does the gatekeeping process entail for you, your program, and the institution where you are employed?
4. What are your perceptions of the efficacy of gatekeeping?
5. What are your perceptions about how multiculturalism pertains to the gatekeeping process?

NOTE: All follow-up interviews will follow this method of questioning. Probing questions will be utilized throughout the interviews to investigate and describe participants' perceptions and experiences.

APPENDIX E

Demographics Inventory

DEMOGRAPHICS INVENTORY

1. Gender: _____ Male _____ Female

2. Ethnic/Racial Background:
_____ African-American _____ Hispanic
_____ Arab-American _____ Native American
_____ Asian-American _____ Biracial/Multiracial
_____ Caucasian _____ Pacific Islander
_____ Other, please state _____

3. What is your degree and in what field:
_____ Ph.D. _____ Counselor Education
_____ Ed.D. _____ Counseling Psychology
_____ Other, please state _____ Other, please state _____

4. # of years as a Counselor Educator: _____

5. # of years as Counselor: _____

6. Please list your specialties: 1. _____
(ex. supervision, play tx, 2. _____
school counseling, etc) 3. _____

7. In a given semester, for how many master's students do you provide clinical supervision? _____

In what format (ex. Ind.or Grp.) do you provide clinical supervision? _____ and
how often do you provide clinical supervision? _____

8. In a given semester, how many master's students do you advise? _____

VITA

Jolie Ziomek Daigle earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology in 1995 from the University of South Florida. In 1997, she earned a Master of Science in Counseling from Loyola University. Jolie is a National Certified Counselor, National Certified School Counselor, Registered Play Therapist and Supervisor, and Licensed Professional Counselor and Board Approved Supervisor in the State of Louisiana.

Since 1998, Jolie has worked as a school counselor with New Orleans Public Schools in a secondary setting. She has also maintained a part-time private practice counseling children and families. Jolie's professional affiliations include the American Counseling Association, Louisiana Counseling Association, Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, American School Counselors Association, and the Association for Play Therapy. She has presented at state, regional, and national conferences on topics such as play therapy, school counseling, clinical supervision, and legal and ethical issues.

After graduation, Jolie will assume a position as assistant professor at The University of Georgia. Her professional interests will include school counseling, play therapy, and legal and ethical issues. Jolie and her husband, Chris, will reside in Athens, Georgia.