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## Military Culture in Counselor Education: Assessing Educators' Perceptions of Inclusion

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# Military Culture in Counselor Education: Assessing Educators' Perceptions of Inclusion

## **Abstract**

Counselor educators are tasked with preparing counselors to effectively engage a wide range of topics and populations within counseling practice. The cultural experience of clients is often a significant focus both in content and experiential learning opportunities. Given the attention within the profession of counseling on our ability to effectively serve military service members and veterans, this begs the question as to the degree the context of the military is viewed as a unique culture within the field of counselor education. This article describes a research study of counselor educators' perceptions of the military as a unique culture. In addition, current and potential strategies designed to address the experience of military service members, veterans, and their families employed within counselor training programs was also surveyed. The study found counselor educators did view the military as a unique culture. Participants also indicated their view of the potential to utilize a wide range of strategies to enhance understanding on the part of counselors-in-training of the unique experience of military service members, veterans, and their families. Limitations of the study, implications for practice, and future research ideas are also provided.

## **Keywords**

military culture, counselor education, VISION model, military service members

## Military Culture in Counselor Education: Assessing Educators' Perceptions of Inclusion

The development of multicultural counseling competencies is a continual discussion within the profession of counseling. The ACA *Code of Ethics* (e.g. E.7.c., E.8., F.2.b.; 2014) (ACA, 2014) and CACREP Standards (Section II, G.2, G.3, G.5) (2016) have developed a set of standards that outline the importance of becoming multiculturally competent, but what are the implications of this perspective within counselor education programs tasked with ensuring all relevant cultures are represented in the classroom? To inform this discussion, a study was conducted regarding the inclusion of *military members* (i.e., active military, veterans, and/or their families) as a distinct and unique culture for inclusion in counselor training programs.

### **Defining Culture in Counseling**

Exploring and defining constructs of culture has been widely discussed in the counseling literature. Within this literature, there appears to be both debate and discussion as to if “multicultural” counseling should be defined broadly (or generic), as to include all cultural groups, or narrowly (or focused), as to include specific cultural groups. Sue and Sue (1977) state, “In simple terms, culture consists of all those things that people have learned to do, believe, value, and enjoy in their history. It is the ideals, beliefs, skills, tools, customs, and institutions in to which each member of society is born” (p. 424). They addressed the dangers of imposing majority values of the counselor in counseling sessions with third-world or non-Western clients. They discuss how language-values, class-values, and culture-values of majority, Western counselors may be limiting effective communication among certain cultural groups, such as Asian, black, Chicano, and Native American groups, and may contribute to these groups' lack of involvement in counseling services. Sue and Sue outline language, cultural, and class distinctions

of Asian, black, Chicano, and Native American groups, and how the traditional counselor role fails to recognize these differences among these ethnic and racial groups.

Pederson (1991) described multiculturalism as “the fourth force” in counseling, and specifically referenced a “generic theory of multiculturalism” (p. 6). Pederson discusses the distinction between a multicultural theory and a multicultural method, and argues that a broad multicultural theory provides a framework through which to view the complexities of human society. Pederson states,

By defining culture broadly - to include demographic variables (e.g. age, sex, place of residence), status variables (e.g. social, educational, economic), and affiliations (formal and informal) as well as ethnographic variables such as nationality, ethnicity, language and religion - the construct multicultural becomes generic to all counseling relationships.

The narrow definition of culture has limited multiculturalism to what might more appropriately be called “multiethnic” or “multinational” relationships between groups with a shared sociocultural heritage that includes similarities of religion, history, and common ancestry. (p. 7)

Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) also address the issue of broad versus focused definitions of multiculturalism. In their introduction to the Multicultural Competencies and Standards proposed by Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development, they concede that the standards refer primarily to racial and ethnic groups. However, they also state that the competencies have relevance to other cultural groups, arguing that both generic and focused approaches have merit. Within the Multicultural Competencies and Standards, specific cultural groups are not mentioned, although certain focused characteristics of an individual are interwoven throughout the document, including terms such as heritage, racial, ethnic, minority,

White, sociopolitical influences (immigration, poverty, racism), religious, spiritual, bilingual, and family structures (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

It is possible that the debate between generic versus focused definitions of multiculturalism is connected to the inherent challenges in defining what characteristic or communities constitute a unique culture. The VISION Model developed by Baber, Garrett, and Holcomb-McCoy (1997) is a model of culture defined by the individual's "thoughts, feelings, or actions" (p. 186). VISION is an acronym for Values, Internal responses, Structure of world, Interactive learning, Operational procedures, and Needs fulfillment, which indicates the characteristics that comprise one's culture.

The importance of teaching multiculturalism in counselor education programs is also well-documented in the counseling literature. Whether culture is defined broadly or narrowly, including content on multicultural competence in counselor preparation programs is considered essential to counselor development (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992, Burn 1992). In addition, researchers have offered strategies to include multicultural content generically (Ametrano, Callaway, & Stickel, 2002) and for specific populations, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations (Troutman & Packer-Williams, 2014). Troutman and Packer-Williams (2014) also discussed the problematic nature of broad definitions of multiculturalism, and indicate that specific groups, such as LGBT populations warrant distinct attention. However, there is a dearth of literature examining the military as a unique culture in a counseling context.

### **The Culture of the Military**

It is prudent to explore the culture of the military in order to better understand whether or not it should be included as a multicultural topic in counselor education programs. The military has been described as a "unique environment that causes military personnel and families to have

experiences that differ from civilians”, thus requiring an understanding of military culture to provide culturally competent support (Redmon, Wilcox, Campbell, Kim, Finney, Barr, & Hassan, 2015, p. 9). The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs has developed tools to support increased understanding of military culture (www.va.gov, 2017). Military culture can be largely determined by its organizational structure and/or branch, which impact common values, philosophies, and traditions of military culture. Each branch of service typically has a subculture (e.g. officer and enlisted), thus creating experiences for some military members that might be unique from others. These differences within military culture are often based on branch affiliation, military occupation, and cultural dynamics that occur during times of war or peace (Redmon, et al, 2015).

There are a variety of reasons counselors should concern themselves with military culture. Literature demonstrates that military members experience significant mental health concerns, such as PTSD (Corso, Bryan, Morow, Appolonio, Dodendorf, & Baker, 2009, Dobbs, 2009; French & Parkinson, 2008; Jones, Young, & Leppma, 2010), suicide (Defense Casualty Analysis System, 2011); unemployment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016), homelessness (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016), and substance use (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012, 2014). When considering these concerns and the impact of military culture on their manifestation, it is imperative that counselors-in-training gain exposure to the elements of the military experience that differ from non-military civilian.

### **Military Focus in Current Curricula**

#### **Research problem**

Professional organizations such as the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American Mental Health Counseling Association (AMHCA) worked tirelessly to advocate for

military organizations such as TRICARE and the Veterans Administration to recognize the expertise of professional counselors (ACA, 2010; ACA, 2011; ACA 2013). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) boasts of federal recognition by the Veterans Administration, TRICARE, and the Army Substance Abuse Program (CACREP, 2014). Despite these efforts by the counseling profession, little has been researched on the prevalence of military-focused-content in counselor training programs.

It is important to note that CACREP 2016 standards do not specify which cultural groups should be included in university curricula. Among the “Social and Cultural Diversity” standards (CACREP, 2016, p. 8), specific cultural groups are not mentioned, although terms such as “multicultural and pluralistic characteristics,” “diverse groups nationally and internationally,” and “the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences” (CACREP, 2016, p. 8) allow faculty to define their curricula as they deem appropriate regarding culture and diversity. Despite this lack of implicit instruction provided by CACREP, several cultural competencies are provided on the ACA website, including those authored by Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development and the Association for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC).

The general premise of these cultural competency documents implies that counselors must be competent to work with the population in which they are practicing, and must possess knowledge, skills, and interventions appropriate for working with that specific population. This same premise is articulated in the ethical codes of the profession including, the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014; sections A.2.c, B.1.a, C.2.a, and C.2.b.), American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2010; sections A.1.c, B.1.c., and E2), American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA, 2010; sections C.1.b, C.1.g, C.1.l, and C.2), and the National

Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC, 2012; items 22, 26). Since counseling competencies and codes are not included specifically for military and veterans, counselor educators and practitioners may not view the context of the military as a distinct culture.

It has not yet been established that counselor educators view the military and/or military families as a distinct culture to be included in training programs. Furthermore, the extent to which counselor education programs focus on military culture and counseling issues, or believe that military issues should be a component of these programs, is unknown. Yet the culture and challenges of military populations continue to impact the counseling profession manifested in direct service to military members and families, advocating for access to services, and the need to train qualified service providers.

### **Research Questions**

This study examined the perspectives of counselor educators' recognition of the military as a distinct culture and whether examination of elements of the military population should be included within counselor education programs. The research questions that directed the study were as follows:

1. Do counselor educators view military service members and/or their family members as belonging to a unique culture?
2. In what way, if any, are counseling issues pertaining to military members and/or their family included within counselor training programs?
3. To what degree do counselor educators believe military members and/or their family members should be included as a focus within counselor training programs?



4. Specifically, in which content areas, and to what degree, do counselor educators believe that counseling military service members and/or their families should be included in counselor training?

By surveying counselor educators in Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accredited programs, the authors sought to identify the beliefs and current practices of counselor training programs pertaining to military content.

The unique perspective of the VISION model (Baber, Garrett, & Holcomb-McCoy, 1997) is that it examines beliefs and behaviors both in relation to the individual and the group. Given the shared experience and unique influence of this context on almost all aspects of functioning for those associated with the military, this model was utilized as a conceptual framework for this research study to view, question, and assess counselor educators' perspectives of the military as a culture for this study.

### **Methods**

This mixed methods study provided both descriptive quantitative information and qualitative responses to items related to the culture of the military and the current and potential inclusion of the military experience in the counselor education curriculum. For the quantitative elements of the data, descriptive statistics were utilized to provide indications of the perception on the part of counselor educators on various aspects of the military as a unique culture. The quantitative responses provided a specific description of the participants in the study indicating the generalizability of the results. This data can also establish potential relationships between variables or groups. Finally, this information may be pertinent in the replication of a study (Balkin & Kleist, 2017). In addition, qualitative responses were collected to provide a deeper description of counselor educators' views on the quantitative items.

To initiate an exploration of the connection between military culture and counselor education, the research team canvassed multicultural counseling textbooks to determine the degree to which military populations were covered. We reviewed textbooks published between 1997 and 2014 which were listed on multicultural counseling course syllabi obtained from the ACES/ACA syllabi clearinghouse. Upon review, military populations were listed as a content area in only one (Lee, 2013) of the twenty texts reviewed. In addition, multicultural syllabi obtained from the ACES syllabi clearinghouse found that military was mentioned in none of the 17 syllabi reviewed. Given the apparent lack of attention within this counselor preparation to facets of military culture, it was determined a logical next step was to elicit perceptions of counselor educators on the degree the military is a unique culture as well as the manner in which this topic is covered in current practice related to the training of counselors.

### **Instrument**

A secure, online survey was developed using a university-sponsored Qualtrics© platform. Specifically, the instrument addressed four primary areas including 1) informed consent, 2) assessing military as a culture using the VISION model (Baber, Garrett, & Holcomb-McCoy, 1997), 3) individual and institutional demographics, and 4) current and proposed curricula.

Respondents perspectives of military members and their families as a unique culture were assessed in relation to the relevant five principles (i.e. V- value and belief system, I – internal response to external stimuli, S – structuring of an individual’s phenomenal world, O – operational procedures, and N – needs fulfillment) of the VISION model when specifically applied to military members and their family. For example, a sample question read, “Do you view military service members and/or their family members as having shared beliefs and values?”. This was connected to the “V” or values component of the VISION model. Another example

of a survey item is, “Do you view the manner in which military members and/or their family fulfill emotional, mental, and physical needs as being affected by the context of the military?” This was designed to elicit perceptions on the part of participants of the “N” or needs component of the VISION model. Respondents were asked to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ in relation to these principles. If the indicated response was ‘yes’, respondents were asked to provide an open-ended explanation of their answer providing qualitative responses. Additional questions were constructed to provide an indication if counselor educators perceive military service members and families existing within a unique culture.

It was determined that the Interactive Learning (I) principle defined as taking place through verbal and nonverbal communication in social groups and within one’s physical environment was not as readily apparent to someone not connected to the military and therefore not utilized in the construction of the items. Though one not associated with the military cannot fully understand this experience, the other five principles of the VISION model were deemed somewhat knowable by those outside the context of the military and were assessed.

Descriptive statistics were gathered on both the individual and the institution. Institutional demographics included: CACREP accreditation, program specializations, type of institution, and what state the institution is located. Individual demographics included: gender, education, ethnicity, position, years as a counselor educator, and prior military affiliation (respondent’s prior service or family member’s service).

Assessing curriculum content was more complex. Respondents were asked “In what way, if any, is counseling military members and/or their family currently included in your counselor education training program?” Potential responses ranged from “...not included in our training program, “An elective course dedicated to counseling military members and/or their family...”,

A required course dedicated specifically to counseling military members and/or their family...”, to “counseling military members and/or their family is addressed in other required coursework within our training program.”

Respondents were also asked to identify where and how said content was included in the curriculum. Using a table of the eight CACREP areas (e.g. Career Development, Assessment, Research, etc.; as shown in Table 1) ) as well as selected specialty courses (e.g. Substance Abuse Counseling, School Counseling, etc.) and an “other course” response for a total of thirteen possible responses, respondents were asked to identify if content was addressed in their training program via a Lecture/Guest Speaker, Media Resource, Required Reading, Assignment, or Other. A second table (as shown in Table 2) including the same thirteen courses constituting the eight CACREP areas, selected specialty courses and “other courses” item, respondents were asked “to what extent do you believe military content should be included in these courses?” Response options were “1: not included,” “2: minimally included,” “3: included,” and “4: significantly included” indicating a high degree of attention on the subject matter as perceived by the respondent.

Respondents were asked to what extent they believed that military and military family members should be included as a focus area in counselor training programs. Response options ranged from “1: Strongly Disagree” to “5: Strongly Agree.” Finally, a series of demographic questions were asked to provide a depiction of the characteristics of respondents. More information on this portion of the survey is included in the *Results* section of this discussion. The final survey consisted of 35 questions in total.

## **Procedures**

Upon securing institutional review board approval from affiliated universities, participants were recruited both via email and online listservs. Utilizing the CACREP directory, contact information was gathered from 265 programs. Participants were initially recruited from CACREP programs in Mental Health Counseling ( $n = 38$ ), Clinical Mental Health Counseling ( $n = 100$ ), Community Counseling ( $n = 119$ ) and Career Counseling ( $n = 9$ ). Eleven institutions had two of the above named programs at their institution, thus contacts were made to program directors at 254 universities. Program directors were asked to review the request and forward the survey to faculty within their department who teach in the designated programs. After two attempts at recruiting respondents via e-mail communication, an online listserv for counselor educators and supervisors, CES-NET, was utilized.

## **Results**

The results of the study offered a detailed description of the perceptions of counselor educators regarding the culture of the military and its current and potentially future inclusion within counselor education curricula. This information provides a framework within counselor education to determine the worthiness of including the military experience as a unique culture.

## **Sample**

The final sample of collected surveys consisted of 60 completed responses from counselor educators situated in a variety of counselor education programs located in 26 different states and online. The most frequently indicated areas of concentration for participants were Florida ( $n = 5$ ), Georgia, Oregon, Texas ( $n = 4$ ), and California, Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio ( $n = 3$ ). In terms of representation of the different concentration areas of counseling, mental health counseling was indicated as the highest frequency response ( $n = 54$ ) followed by school counseling ( $n = 48$ ), marriage and family counseling ( $n = 20$ ), and counselor

education/supervision doctorate ( $n = 19$ ). An overwhelming majority indicated their program was CACREP-accredited ( $n = 54$ ). A majority of the respondents also worked in a public university ( $n = 41$ ) though there was representation of faculty members in a private university setting ( $n = 13$ ) as well as religiously-affiliated universities ( $n = 4$ ).

Participants were mostly female in terms of gender (62%,  $n = 37$  females; 35%,  $n = 22$  males; 3%,  $n = 2$  transgender) with most possessing a doctoral degree (85%,  $n = 51$ ). The sample of participants were primarily homogenous in terms of disclosed racial identity. A majority identified as *White* (71%,  $n = 42$ ) with the inclusion of other ethnic/racial identities such as *African American* (12%,  $n = 7$ ), *Hispanic/Latino* (7%,  $n = 4$ ), and *Other* (7%,  $n = 4$ ). Within the *Other* category, *European American*, *Multiethnic Japanese-American*, and *Native American & European-American* were indicated. In relation to the experience level of the respondents, the length of time of the participants have served as a counselor educator ranged from the first year of work to 32 years with an average of 11.1 years (standard deviation = 8.97).

In order to obtain a better understanding of the potential personal connection of the respondents to the experience of the military, items were included that inquired about prior family military experience as well as prior personal military experience. The participants indicated that a majority had a parent in the military (69%,  $n = 33$ ) with extended family also being frequently indicated (uncle/aunt 50%,  $n = 24$ ; cousin 40%,  $n = 19$ ; grandparent 27%,  $n = 13$ ). In relation to prior personal military experience, a significant majority of respondents did not have a history of serving in the military (90%,  $n = 54$  – No; 10%,  $n = 6$  – Yes).

### **Perceptions of the Military as a Culture**

Counselor educators provided their perceptions of the military as a unique culture by indicating their agreement with characteristics of this population in relation to the VISION

model conceptualization. Several elements of the model were incorporated into the items with a primary focus on the contextual impact on shared values and beliefs as well as goal-directed behavior. Respondents were provided the opportunity to indicate their agreement with the various items.

In alignment with the VISION model conceptualization of culture, counselor educators indicated military populations possess /demonstrate shared beliefs and values (V; 93%). Some of the frequently indicated examples provided by the respondents were, “commitment, discipline, family, loyalty, patriotism, sacrifice, and service”. Respondents indicated that strategies that military members and/or families generate to address various issues are affected by shared beliefs and values (S; 93%). Participants provided perceptions such as “...military families are a component of a larger system. They look out for one another and offer assistance when needed.”, “Belief they need to be strong despite difficulties...”, and “Help seeking can be perceived as weakness so early intervention is often not possible.”

Additionally, respondents (88%) believed that military populations are affected by the context of the military in handling of external issues (I). Examples provided were, “Military Culture is highly structured and organized to maximize desired results efficiently.”, “There are specific social rules as well as living conditions that affect socialization patterns as well as ways of dealing with conflict...”, and “They’ve been through experiences most will never go through, and it has a culture unique to that.”

According to the counselor educators who responded, operational goals and strategies of the military also appear to significantly affect behavioral expectations of military members and their families (O; 93%). Some of the ways in which this manifests according to the respondents were, “...depends on if the soldier is active duty, guard, or reserve. Behavioral expectations are

somewhat stressed differently.”, “Family members are often left alone while the military person travels for extended periods of time in possibly unsafe situations”, and “...stigma against mental health issues; the pressure of the warrior identity on the person.”

Finally, participants indicated agreement with the population being affected by the military context in the manner in which emotional, mental and physical needs are fulfilled by the context of the military (N; 95%). Examples of the manner in which the respondents indicated this manifests for military members and/or their families were, “emphasis on ‘toughness’ can make it difficult to ask for help”, “The military as a community with support services within the military impact the support they receive...”, and “The biggest issues stem from the military’s need for members to function automatically. It makes it difficult for them to handle the emotional pressures and social cues needed to function in families.”

In relation to the first research question which stated, “Do counselor educators view military service members and/or their family members as belonging to a unique culture?”, counselor educators who responded appeared to strongly endorse the military as a unique culture. They also provided a wide array of perceptions in which they viewed the experience of military members and/or their families being impacted by the military culture as defined by the VISION model.

### **Current Inclusion in Counselor Education Curriculum**

To address the second research question, “In what way, if any, are counseling issues pertaining to military members and/or their family included within counselor training programs?”, respondents were asked to the degree that counselor education curriculum incorporates military considerations within their respective institutions and the manner in which this occurs within their programs. Respondents indicated that counseling military members



and/or their families is primarily included in their training program within other required coursework (67%) as opposed to a required course on this subject (0%) or an elective on counseling this population (7%). A fairly large segment (29%) indicated no inclusion of counseling military members and/or their families in their training programs.

Counselor educators indicated the specific courses and manner in which military counseling issues are addressed. Respondents had the opportunity to indicate more than one course leading to a raw score for responses in each category. The multicultural class was identified as the most utilized course (37) with required readings (15) serving as the most common manner of focusing attention on this topic followed by lecture/guest speaker (9) and media resource (6). The category of *Other* (32) was the second most frequently indicated course, specifically a crisis related course (4) and a special course on military culture/family (3). Mental health counseling (24) was the third most frequently indicated course with required readings (9) and lecture/guest speaker (7) being the primary method of examining elements of the military population.

### **Potential Inclusion in Counselor Education Curriculum**

For the third research question regarding the specific subject areas of potential inclusion of military topics within the counselor education curriculum, counselor educators were asked the extent they agree that military members and/or family should be included as a focus area within counseling training programs and the potential areas in which this topic could be included. A majority of respondents agreed (43%) or strongly agreed (36%) with this statement. Respondents who indicated at least minimal agreement to the previous statement were then asked to indicate which course and to the degree it should be included in the course. Those who indicated either *Included* or *Significantly Included* were considered to have endorsed their inclusion in this

subject area. Respondents indicated they viewed Mental Health Counseling as the most appropriate venue (44). The second most frequently indicated courses were career development (42) and Marriage and Family (42) with the third most indicated course being Substance Abuse (41). These responses provided insight as to counselor educators' perceptions of both the importance of covering this topic in the counselor education curriculum and the subject areas that merit inclusion of information on military service members and/or their families.

In addition, it is important to note that Multicultural was not an option to select as a course where military culture should be included. Since a multicultural course might be an obvious inclusion for cultural discussions, a decision was made to remove this as an option with participants indicating other areas of the curriculum in which an examination of the unique experience of this population could occur. However, there were respondents (4) who self-selected "Other" and typed Multicultural as a course option to include military culture. These responses provide insight as to counselor educators' perceptions of both the importance of covering this topic in the counselor education curriculum and the manner in which this should occur.

### **Discussion**

There are several interesting elements to consider in relation to the view of the military as a unique culture as well as the inclusion of this subject matter in counselor education curriculums. There seems to be disconnect between the view of the military as a unique culture and its current inclusion in aspects of counselor education curriculums. Given the endorsement of the significance of the military experience, it seems important to revisit the degree in which military members are examined within counselor education programs. There are some

indications of attention to the subject matter in counselor preparation which provides hope for enhanced attention on the needs of military-connected individuals and families.

### **Implications for Counselor Education Curriculum**

According to the American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics (2014), counselors have a responsibility to infuse multicultural/diversity competency in their training and supervision practices (F.11.c.). Given this ethical responsibility to the profession, it is imperative that counselor education programs provide adequate training in the areas of multicultural competencies. Whether the topic is addressed through required case studies, readings, or guest lecturers, the survey results indicate that counselor educators have begun to develop supplemental curriculum and activities to prepare counselors for working with military personnel within a cultural framework. Responses from the survey indicated that several institutions are in the process of creating elective courses or one-day training programs to prepare future counselors in working with military members. This speaks to the valuing of this topic within counselor training programs. Hence, while the inclusion of this topic in curriculum could prove beneficial, there are other ways to ensure counselors develop multicultural/diversity competencies as it relates to those impacted by the experience of the military. Modification of the curriculum specifically related to culture awareness may require significant effort on the part of counselor training programs.

Since counselor educators have innately moved forward with the infusion of military culture as a training topic in the classroom, it is equally important for the profession and accrediting bodies to acknowledge military as a culture. This would raise questions related to the appropriate avenue (e.g., seminars, practicum, elective courses, certificate programs, etc.) to include military as a culture, and the extent to which counselors in training would participate in

training activities. The results indicate that preference may be given to Mental Health Counseling, Career Counseling, or Marriage and Family courses. However, it is important to look to CACREP standards for further clarification on integration of the population into counselor education curriculum.

### **Implications for Counseling Supervision**

Much learning takes place within the realm of counseling supervision. Supervisors are often the so-called “first-responders” when addressing an immediate clinical concern on the part of counselors. Given the findings of this study, there is a need for counselors to be culturally-competent when assisting those connected to the military experience. Whether it be the setting in which a supervisee is working, such as a Veteran’s Administration hospital or a mental health clinic on a military installation or a client impacted by the military experience, counseling supervisors would benefit greatly from acquiring knowledge of the needs of this population.

Asking informed questions of the supervisees to draw their attention to the potential impact of military culture on their clients or providing information on quality resources related to this topic are a few ways in which a supervisor can positively intervene. In addition, providing opportunities for supervisees to discuss their perceptions and reactions to presented clinical material with an eye to contextual factors of the military, such as unit cohesion, stress associated with reintegration, and other unique experiences of the military can enhance supervisees’ development of cultural competence.

### **Limitations**

The findings of this study must be examined in relation to the limitations of the research. A primary limitation of the study involved a limited number of survey respondents. While the results indicate that the majority of counselor educators surveyed support military culture in

curricula and instruction, the small sample size indicates that there is a large percentage of counselor educators not accounted for in the survey results. When examining the geographic responses, there are 24 states from which no counselor educator responded, essentially indicating that data from any counselor education program in that state is not accounted for. The small sample size also limits the diversity of respondents, demonstrated in a limited response rate from racial minorities constraining the generalizability of the results.

A final limitation is the overwhelming majority, approximately 80% of the respondents indicated that they had a family member in the military. These results raise the possibility that respondents may be predisposed to the issues of military culture and may have a personal, in addition to professional, desire to see these needs addressed in counseling curriculum. It is important to consider the possibility of the respondents' bias or preference toward military clients. Counselor educators without a personal or family connection to the military may not share these beliefs, and, again, results should be considered with this in mind.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Though this study provided a broad array of information related to the inclusion of the military as a cultural element within counselor education programs, much more can be learned regarding this topic. Future research could diversify the sample to include counselor educators who are not connected or familiar to the experience of military service members, veterans, and their families. This would provide a broader range of perspectives related to the culture of the military. In addition, the impact of the various modalities on students' awareness and understanding of the experience of this population would provide an empirically-based structure in which to recommend to counselor education programs interested in including this topic in their curriculum. One potential extension of this research regarding the impact of this training on

counselors would be that of the military-connected client perceptions of their experience in counseling.

Other areas of research might focus on the specific elements of the VISION model as they relate to the context of the military. Surveying military personnel regarding their experience in the military and determining the degree these align with the specific aspects of this model would be useful. In addition, examining other proposed definitions of culture and the degree the experience of the military would further establish this context as a unique cultural entity, worthy of consideration in this manner. Though much was learned from the current study, several additional aspects merit investigation to more fully understand the military context and its implications within the realm of counseling.

### **Closing**

The culture of the military creates unique challenges and cultural considerations that professional counselors should be prepared to address. As counselor educators, it is important to advocate for inclusion of special populations within counselor education programs, including military populations and their families. Counselor training programs may need to further enhance their classes and curriculum to include military culture related to counseling to better prepare counselors-in-training to provide quality services to clients impacted by the experience of the military.

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[year/2010/2010/10/04/departments-of-veterans-affairs-recognizes-licensed-professional-mental-health-counselors!](http://www.counseling.org/news/news-release-archives/by-year/2010/2010/10/04/departments-of-veterans-affairs-recognizes-licensed-professional-mental-health-counselors!)

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[year/2011/2011/01/07/congress-passes-ndaa-recommending-independent-tricare-practice-for-counselors.](http://www.counseling.org/news/news-release-archives/by-year/2011/2011/01/07/congress-passes-ndaa-recommending-independent-tricare-practice-for-counselors.)

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[papers/2013/03/26/counselors-continue-to-be-all-but-shut-out-of-the-va.-here%27s-what-you-can-do-to-help.](http://www.counseling.org/government-affairs/current-issues/position-papers/2013/03/26/counselors-continue-to-be-all-but-shut-out-of-the-va.-here%27s-what-you-can-do-to-help.)

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Counseling (12)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Multicultural (13)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Course (14)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Table 2: Degree of Military Culture Inclusion in Specific Courses

If you agree that military members and/or their family should be included as a focus area within counselor training programs, to what extent do you believe they should be included, and in which course(s)?

	Not included in this course (1)	Minimally included in this course (2)	Included in this course (3)	Significantly included in this course (4)
Orientation & Ethics (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Growth & Development (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping Relationships (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Counseling Theory (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Group Dynamics (5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Career Development (6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appraisal (7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research (8)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Substance Abuse (9)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage & Family (10)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Counseling (11)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental Health Counseling (12)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other Course  
(13)

