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Exploring Counselor Educator Dispositions Related to Teaching

Abstract

This study explores students' preferences for counselor educator (CE) teaching dispositions. Forty-eight counselor education students completed a Q sort and answered post-sort qualitative questions. The study found four types of student preferences: a focus on experiential teaching, a focus on content and affect orientation, a focus on the educator-student relationship, and a focus on developing clinical skills. Also among the findings are a set of items that were unanimously unimportant to the participants: CE engagement in research and gatekeeping. These preferences are situated within the scholarship of teaching and learning and evidence-based practices in counselor education. Practical and research implications are shared.

Keywords

teaching dispositions, pedagogy, Q methodology

Author's Notes

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Teaching is a core role of counselor educators (CEs) (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2016) and arguably the role in which faculty members across ranks and institutions spend most of their time (Ziker, 2014). Although the American Counseling Association (ACA) *Code of Ethics* (2014) and Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) *Best Practices in Teaching in Counselor Education* (ACES, 2016) highlight complexity of teaching roles and functions, it was not until 2016 that CACREP specified standards for preparing doctoral-level students for their roles as teachers of graduate-level practitioners.

Counselor education places unique demands on CEs; however, there is limited literature specific to best practices in graduate, professional preparation, for CEs. CEs are responsible for teaching students core curricular knowledge, developing students' clinical skills, and demonstrating professional dispositions consistent with the responsibilities students will assume as mental health providers (ACA, 2014; CACREP, 2016). Further, CEs are responsible for engaging students in self-exploration and personal-growth experiences, addressing problems of professional competency, and ensuring that students are able and willing to uphold standards of the profession (ACA, 2014; CACREP, 2016).

Although CEs may use pedagogically-oriented journal articles to guide their teaching practice, the literature is overwhelmingly focused on specific content considerations or techniques to use in the classroom, with fewer than one in ten articles attending to more general applications of teaching and learning (Barrio Minton, Wachter Morris, & Yaites, 2014; Barrio Minton, Wachter Morris, & Bruner, 2018). Similarly, existing texts regarding teaching in counselor education (e.g., McAuliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Perera-Diltz & MacCluskie, 2012; West, Bubenzer, Cox, & McGlothlin, 2013) are often focused on the teaching product via exploration of techniques,

activities, and assignments for use in specific courses with relatively less attention to conceptualizing cross-cutting elements of the teaching process as a whole. These resources often illustrate applications of content knowledge or techniques for use in the classroom; however, they rarely specify dispositions or behaviors for CEs, and they often do not provide guidance for planning and navigating the teaching process. Following a brief overview of literature related to foundations in higher education in general and counselor education specifically, we introduce a Q-methodology study designed to illuminate counseling graduate students' preferences for CE teaching dispositions and behaviors.

Pedagogical Foundations in Higher Education

Scholars have conceptualized education from various theoretical philosophies and developmental perspectives. Professionals in higher education have developed a practical foundation for teaching adult learners. Contemporary theories of andragogy, experiential learning, and transformative learning often emerge as teaching foundations within higher education (Merriam & Bierema, 2014) and have been applied to counselor education and supervision literature (Barrio Minton et al., 2014; Barrio Minton et al., 2018).

The theories of andragogy, experiential learning, and transformative learning have contributed to a holistic perspective of learners and their learning process. Andragogy is founded in self-directed learning, respect for learners, practical applications of concepts, and recognition of adult learners' past experiences that contribute to their knowledge (Knowles, 1975; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). Experiential learning is a dynamic, cyclical process that links education, work, and personal experiences to enhance the practical application of knowledge (Kolb, 2015). Transformative learning is the process by which learners come to make meaning of

their lived experiences; that is, it focuses on *how* learners know rather than *what* they know (Mezirow, 2000).

A counterbalance to theories of learning is teaching style, that is, multidimensional ways educators perform tasks of teaching including classroom management, material presentation, and student interaction and mentoring (Grasha, 1994). Grasha's teaching styles model includes five types: expert, formal authority, personal model, facilitator, delegator. Educators typically blend multiple styles to form their personal approach to teaching (Grasha, 2002). Educators adapt their styles to accommodate student development, the subject matter, and the desired teaching objectives. Teaching style has rarely been mentioned in the counselor education literature despite, with only brief mentions in Hunt and Gilmore (2011) and Haag Granello and Hazler (1998). Yet, there are emerging trends in the professional literature suggesting philosophical grounding for teaching practice (Barrio Minton et al., 2014; Barrio Minton et al., 2018; CACREP, 2016; Wood et al., 2016).

Effective Teaching in Counselor Education

An extensive review of the literature of effective teaching specific to counselor education identified few articles. A thematic analysis was used to summarize the findings into the major themes within perceptions of teaching effectiveness. The themes include: experiential learning, application, teaching style, respect for the learner, individualized learning, educator leadership, content knowledge, reflective teaching practices, and a relational approach (Buller, 2013; Kreider, 2009; Moate, Cox, Brown, & West, 2017; Moate, Holm, & West, 2017; Pietrzak, Duncan, & Korkuska, 2008).

The most prominent theme in terms of prevalence was *experiential learning* (Kreider, 2009; Moate, Cox, Brown, & West, 2017; Moate, Holm, & West, 2017; Pietrzak, Duncan, &

Korkuska, 2008). The concepts noted in the findings that led to greater perceptions of impact included CE demonstrations of particular techniques or skills, hands-on application of content, and facilitation of collaborations among students. The findings also indicated that students identified an external motivation to learn, including a desire to receive high grades or rewards as well as be entertained, inspired, or engaged by the CE. Additionally, the findings indicated that students preferred a de-emphasis on lectures, streamlined readings, and limited homework.

The second major theme was *application* (Moate, Cox, Brown, & West, 2017; Moate, Holm, & West, 2017). Findings from these studies indicated students preferred teaching practices that elevated the practical use of content knowledge through the use of examples or case studies, experiences that facilitated the connections between theory and the “real world”, and the direct application of skills to counseling practice. The findings also support that students preferred CEs that are skilled practitioners actively engaged in the practice of mental health counseling.

Teaching style was the third most prominent theme identified in the teaching effectiveness literature (Buller, 2013; Kreider, 2009; Moate, Cox, Brown, & West, 2017; Moate, Holm, & West, 2017; Pietrzak et al., 2008). Teaching style encompassed characteristic aspects of CEs and their delivery style. Examples included CE enthusiasm, charisma, passion for the material, energy, and authenticity. Notably, this theme included CE’s care for and care of their students.

Less prominent themes in the effective teaching literature were: *respect for the learner*, *individualized learning*, and *educator leadership*. *Respect for the learner* included validation and valuation of students’ experiences, as well as CE compassion, empathy, and interest in students (Buller, 2013; Kreider, 2009; Moate, Cox, Brown, & West, 2017; Moate, Holm, & West, 2017; Pietrzak et al., 2008). *Individualized learning* included CE's facilitation of student autonomy, independence, and parallel working style in the learning environment as well as CE flexibility in

class time (Kreider, 2009; Moate, Cox, Brown, & West, 2017; Moate, Holm, & West, 2017). *Educator leadership* included active leadership from CEs with frequent, direct, strengths-based feedback and strong course organization (Buller, 2013; Kreider, 2009; Moate, Cox, Brown, & West, 2017; Moate, Holm, & West, 2017; Pietrzak et al., 2008).

The following themes were considerably present, albeit to a lesser degree: *content knowledge*, *reflective teaching practices*, and a *relational approach*. *Content knowledge* encompassed the ideas of both theoretical and practical knowledge (Buller, 2013; Moate, Cox, Brown, & West, 2017; and Pietrzak et al., 2008). *Reflective teaching practices* incorporated the CE's facilitation of deep learning and reflective thinking (Kreider, 2009; Moate, Holm, & West, 2017). Lastly, the theme of a *relational approach* incorporated students' emphasis on student-educator relationships that were growth provoking and a learning environment characterized by the safety needed to make mistakes and grow (Moate, Cox, Brown, and West, 2017; Kreider, 2009).

Taken together, the themes identified in the literature underscore the importance of the person of the educator. Each of the themes speak to ways the educator can intentionally shape the learning environment. Given the limited number of articles and the interesting findings, further exploration of the teaching role of CEs and the ways CE dispositions impact learners and the learning environment seems warranted.

Educator Dispositions

Much of the literature regarding dispositions in counselor education centers on the assessment of student dispositions with regard to gatekeeping and remediation (e.g., Henderson & Dufrene, 2012) or the CACREP Standards (2016), which require dispositional assessment of all students (e.g., Spurgeon, Gibbons, & Cochran, 2012; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014). Counselor

dispositions have been linked to the effectiveness of counseling and counselor professional competence (Homrich, DeLorenzi, Bloom, & Godbee, 2014). Further, counselor dispositions and values are indicated in the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) as essential to the core ethical principles of the profession.

As the literature is limited on counselor educator dispositions, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2013; previously the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE]) standards offers a framework for the inclusion of professional dispositions, alongside knowledge and skills, in educator training. Professional dispositions are defined as: “Professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development.” (NCATE, 2014, p. 89). Many teacher education scholars have developed and evolved the concept and assessment of dispositions, and many scholars advocate for a developmental conceptualization of dispositions, that is, that professional dispositions can be taught and developed (Diez, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

Although existing literature provides some evidence of scholarly dialogue regarding the teaching role of CEs, there is much that is not yet known about CE dispositions that support the process of teaching in counselor education. Scholars have called for a greater focus on the pedagogical foundations of the field and quality research of teaching and learning in the field of counselor education (Barrio-Minton et al., 2014). Barrio-Minton (2019) identified that emerging scholarship that attends to the student perceptions of teaching would benefit the field by specifically attending to actionable implications for CEs.

To illuminate best practices in counselor education, this study aimed to examine CE dispositions that graduate counseling students perceived as important to their learning. Thus, the research question for this study was: What CE teaching dispositions are important to graduate counseling students? For the purpose of this study, disposition is operationally defined in alignment with the teacher education standards, as CE's professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through verbal and nonverbal behaviors that promote learning and development through interactions with students, colleagues, and communities.

Method

Q methodology is characterized by two main features: (a) the collection of data in the form of Q sorts and (b) correlations and by-person factor analysis of those Q sorts (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Although there is variability in the method for conducting Q research, there is a generally agreed-upon sequence of steps (Watts & Stenner, 2012): (a) concourse development, (b) statement and participant sampling, (c) Q sorting, (d) data analysis, and (e) interpretation.

Concourse Development and Q Set Selection

The concourse for this study included statements obtained from a comprehensive literature review and focus groups with the target population. Following institutional review board approval, the first author conducted two focus groups at two CACREP-accredited counselor education programs that were excluded from solicitation for the Q sort. A total of 10 participants attended the focus groups, split equally between master's practicum and doctoral students. The focus groups followed Kress and Shoffner's (2007) model. The first author facilitated the focus groups in which participants were asked to identify characteristics and behaviors of CEs who they believed excelled in teaching. The focus groups were audio-recorded and coded. The items the participants identified were synthesized into a comprehensive list.

The concourse was created by combining the comprehensive list from the focus groups with the database of statements gathered from the literature on teaching in counselor education, the scholarship of teaching and learning, adult education theory, and teaching and learning styles. The complete concourse consisted of 471 statements that reflected participants' natural language (McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012). The concourse was edited through a process of eliminating duplicates and condensing similar items. In consultation with a panel of three established counselor educators, the concourse was paired down to 41 items that had high face validity and were representative of diverse perspectives both in the literature and focus groups. Table 1 includes the final 41 items of the Q set.

Participants

Participant sets in Q research are typically limited as the methodology requires only as many participants as are needed to establish the presence of a factor (Brown, 1980; Stephenson, 1953). Typical Q methodology studies identify seven or fewer factors, with an average of five participants whose sorts significantly load on each factor. Participants in this study were 48 ($N = 48$) master's and doctoral students solicited from 100 randomly selected CACREP-accredited counseling programs across the United States. Participants identified as female (92%) and male (8%); no participant identified as transgender. Participants reported their race/ethnicity as White/European (85%), Hispanic/Latinx (8%), African American or Black (2%), and Multiethnic (4%); no participants identified as Asian, Native American, or Other. Participants identified as heterosexual (88%), bisexual (6%), gay/lesbian (4%), and questioning (2%). The participants' ages ranged from 21-53 ($M = 27.27$, $SD = 6.16$) Participants were most likely to be attending graduate school full-time (79%) compared to part-time (21%) Participants consisted of full time (79%) and part-time (21%) students. They represented various stages of education including master's level

coursework before fieldwork (46%), master's practicum (29%), master's internship (19%), and doctoral (6%). Participants identified their theoretical orientation as humanistic/existential (56%), cognitive-behavioral (27%), family systems (4%), multicultural (4%), and feminist (4%).

Table 1

Factor Arrays

#	Statement	A		B		C		D	
		Z- score	Rank	Z- score	Rank	Z- score	Rank	Z- score	Rank
	<u>I prefer a counselor educator that...</u>								
1	advocates for students	-0.698	32	-0.641	30	0.027	23	0.658	14
2	assigns meaningful assignments and activities	0.865	8	-0.466	28	0.079	20	0.728	11
3	creates emotional safety in the learning environment	0.672	13	0.818	10	1.683	2	0.329	19
4	makes requirements clear	1.036	7	1.500	4	-1.086	35	-0.477	27
5	emphasizes students' holistic development	0.015	22	0.066	21	-0.327	27	0.908	8
6	encourages students to take appropriate risks in their learning	-0.565	28	-1.236	35	0.078	21	-0.732	33
7	engages in research	-2.679	41	-2.078	41	-2.057	41	-1.331	38
8	engages students in the learning process	1.516	3	0.067	20	0.553	15	1.206	5
9	has a sense of humor	0.565	14	-1.413	37	0.589	14	-2.263	41
10	helps students connect with resources	-0.725	33	-0.648	31	-1.278	37	0.853	10
11	invests in students both professionally and personally	-1.393	38	-0.508	29	2.037	1	0.591	16
12	is a role-model	-0.338	27	-1.327	36	-0.381	29	-0.614	31
13	is accessible	-0.074	23	1.408	5	-0.869	32	-0.290	24
14	is adaptable with teaching methods	-0.232	26	-0.717	33	-0.613	31	-0.799	34
15	is an effective gatekeeper for the profession	-0.657	31	0.010	22	-1.979	40	0.681	12
16	is consistent	0.459	18	0.991	7	-0.238	26	-0.654	32
17	is direct	-1.108	37	-0.172	24	-1.704	38	0.160	21
18	is empathic	0.523	16	0.613	14	1.093	6	-0.474	26
19	is encouraging	0.735	11	0.276	16	1.173	5	-1.065	35
20	is genuine	1.154	5	0.270	17	-0.099	25	-0.572	30
21	is knowledgeable	0.700	12	1.683	1	1.373	3	0.869	9
22	is non-judgmental	0.544	15	0.079	19	0.132	19	-1.331	38
23	is open	-0.212	24	-0.685	32	0.228	18	0.391	17
24	is organized	-0.770	34	0.702	13	-1.165	36	-0.086	22
25	is passionate	0.502	17	1.581	2	1.217	4	0.192	20
26	is patient	-0.648	30	-0.219	25	-0.366	28	-2.094	40
27	is personable	-0.214	25	-1.106	34	0.818	8	-0.341	25
28	is respectful	0.812	9	1.512	3	0.634	13	-0.090	23
29	is self-aware	0.038	21	-0.075	23	0.940	7	0.677	13
30	is attuned to students' needs	0.038	21	-0.345	26	0.321	17	-0.548	28
31	is trustworthy	0.737	10	0.088	18	0.719	10	-0.568	29
32	offers guidance	-0.581	29	1.132	6	0.014	24	-1.327	36
33	provides constructive feedback effectively	1.588	2	0.935	8	0.718	11	1.241	4
34	relates concepts to practical applications	1.166	4	0.593	15	0.048	22	1.358	3
35	shares personal experiences	-1.019	35	0.795	11	0.663	12	0.611	15
36	shares up-to-date knowledge	1.059	6	0.886	9	-0.978	34	0.908	8
37	supports self-directed learning	-1.429	39	-1.425	38	-1.747	39	-1.546	39
38	tailors classes to students' developmental needs	-1.091	36	-1.754	40	0.437	16	1.080	6
39	uses experiential learning activities	1.671	1	-1.536	39	-0.937	33	1.797	1
40	values many perspectives	0.204	19	-0.368	27	0.799	9	0.329	19
41	engages in counseling practice beyond teaching responsibilities	-2.164	40	0.739	12	-0.546	30	1.632	2

Procedure

Participants were obtained through a random sample of 100 CACREP-accredited programs, for which 79 program coordinators received e-mail solicitation. Response rates were unable to be accurately calculated because the required participant set was secured within 24 hours of sending solicitation emails. Program coordinators were asked to forward a solicitation email with a link to a Qualtrics study with informed consent and demographic survey (11 demographic items) to enrolled students. Upon completion of the demographics survey, participants were directed to complete the Q sort online.

Q-Assessor was utilized for data collection and analysis (Reber, Kaufman, & Cropp, 2000). The condition of instruction for this study was: “Please rank the statements based on your preference for the teaching attitudes, values, and beliefs of counselor educators.” The Q sort distribution consisted of a symmetric arrangement of 41 squares arranged in a platykurtic normal curve, transposed across the x-axis. Thirteen columns were numbered from *-6 most unimportant* to *+6 most important*. The zero point at the center of the distribution is an important theoretical consideration because it denotes a point of non-significance that the placement of each Q statement is relatively measured (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Participants sorted the Q set based on the ranking dimension of importance, from most agree to most disagree.

Immediately following the sort, participants answered three open-ended interview questions regarding their sort. The questions were:

1. Thinking about the items you placed at the “Most Important” columns (+6 and +5), describe your process for deciding which statements to assign as the most important to you. That is, what is the significance of the items to you?

2. Thinking about the items you placed at the “Most Unimportant” columns (-6 and -5), describe your process for deciding which statements to assign as the most important to you. That is, what is the significance of the items to you? and
3. Were you particularly drawn to any of the statements? Why?

Lastly, two questions were included to provide the first 30 participants with compensation in the form of a \$20 gift card.

Data Analysis

A total of 48 Q sorts were intercorrelated and factor analyzed. Factor analysis was set to extract seven factors (Brown, 1980), six of which were identified as significant. These factors were identified by visual analysis of eigenvalues; factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 were retained based on the Kaiser-Guttman criteria (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The six factors explained 41.04% of variance in participants’ Q-sorts. Participant factor loadings greater than +/-0.306 (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 198) suggested a common point of view expressed by a group. Initially, 45 of 48 participants loaded on at least one factor at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Factor A accounted for the greatest variability with 35 sorts loading on this factor. Factors B, C, and D accounted for similar percentages of variance with fewer numbers of sorts loading on them. Data analyses were constrained to Factors A-D for varimax rotation due to high cross-loadings. Next, the first author constructed factor arrays that represented all Q sorts that contributed to the factor (Brown, 1993). Table 1 includes normalized scores and ranks for each statement, that is, the order of importance participants assigned as they sorted the statements into the Q-sort. Distinguishing items were identified as those items with a Z-score difference of greater than 1.00 for at least two factors. Table 2 shows factor distinguishing items, eigenvalues, percent total

variance accounted for, reliability coefficient, standard error, and number of participants loading was created.

Factor interpretation is the last step of the data analysis process. Narrative descriptions of each factor array were constructed by synthesizing the views and preferences of participants who loaded on each factor (Brown, 1993; Thompson, 2000). In addition to the factor arrays, we examined participants' demographic characteristics and post-sort interview.

Table 2

Summary of Factors

	Factor A	Factor B	Factor C	Factor D
Participants Loading	19 (10)	16 (6)	15 (6)	10 (2)
Eigenvalue	5.05	4.32	3.90	2.82
% Total Variance	10.5	9.0	8.1	5.9
Reliability	.98	.97	.97	.92
Standard Error	.14	.16	.17	.28
Distinguishing Items	has a sense of humor is genuine makes requirements clear uses experiential learning activities	engages in counseling practice beyond teaching responsibilities is accessible is consistent is organized is passionate makes requirements clear offers guidance	creates emotional safety in the learning environment has a sense of humor invests in students both professionally and personally is personable tailors classes to students' developmental needs	advocates for students engages in counseling practice beyond teaching responsibilities helps students connect with resources invests in students both professionally and personally is direct tailors classes to students' developmental needs uses experiential learning activities

Results

Factor A: Engaging Students in Meaningful Classroom Experiences

Factor A explained 10.5% of the adjusted total observed variance with a composite reliability of .98 and standard error of factor scores of .14. Nineteen participants (40%) loaded on this factor, of which 10 participants loaded on this factor only. Demographic data from participants

that statistically significantly loaded on only Factor A did not explain aspects of this factor. The distinguishing statements for this factor are listed in Table 2.

Factor A participants ranked CEs' use of experiential learning activities (item 39) and meaningful assignments and activities (item 2) along with CEs' engagement of students in the learning process (item 8) as highly important. In the post-sort open-ended qualitative section, many participants discussed their appreciation for experiential activities. One participant reported, "Professors that used these types of activities have not only embedded the information, but [it has] stayed with me personally."

Likewise, Factor A participants placed a high value on the effective use of constructive feedback (item 33), the practical application of concepts (item 34), and the dissemination of up-to-date knowledge (item 36). Many participants shared how constructive feedback was an essential element of their professional development. One participant noted, "Constructive feedback is also important – however to me, it was much more important for someone to answer my questions, rather than focusing so much on how not 'to hurt my feelings'. Feedback should be direct in my opinion..." Another participant reported:

...constructive feedback throughout the education process is key to developing in any profession, and particularly important in counseling. I want an educator who is able to provide me with effective feedback and coaching to improve my counseling, for example feedback on a video recording for a techniques course. Without feedback, students will continue to make the same mistakes and be left to self-reflect until reaching the professional level.

Participants on Factor A also emphasized the person of the CE. They highly ranked CE genuineness (item 20), respect (item 28), trustworthiness (item 31), encouraging (item 19), non-

judgmental (item 22), and empathic (item 18). One participant noted a connection between the dispositions of counselors and CEs: “I believe being genuine and empathic is the foundation of a good counselor. Therefore, these qualities are most important to me in a counselor educator.”

Factor B: Providing Applicable Learning with Emotional Safety

Factor B explained 9.0% of the adjusted total observed with a composite reliability of .97 and a standard error of factor scores of .16. Sixteen participants (33%) loaded on this factor, and six participants loaded on this factor only. Demographics of those who statistically significantly loaded on Factor B did not explain aspects of this factor. Distinguishing statements for this factor are listed in Table 2.

Participants in Factor B placed an emphasis on CEs' abilities to be competent in both effectively transmitting knowledge and facilitating emotional safety in the learning environment. They placed importance on CE knowledge (item 21) that was up-to-date (item 36), consistency (item 16), accessibility (item 13), organization (item 24), clarity in requirements (item 4). Additionally, they identified CEs' empathy (item 18), personal experiences (item 35), engagement in counseling practice outside of teaching (item 41) and, ability to relate concepts to practical application as important to their learning process. The dual emphasis encompassed in this factor was articulated by one participant who stated, "I thought about what things could I absolutely not do without in an educator. I can't learn from an educator who isn't knowledgeable, and I can't learn to be empathic from someone who isn't empathic themselves." Another participant discussed their valuation of emotional safety and holistic development: “Emphasizing holistic learning and emotional safety in the learning environment are crucial to creating well-rounded counselors that also know how to treat clients holistically and create emotional safety in counseling sessions.”

Important differences between Factor A and Factor B are notable. Whereas participants in Factor A ranked experiential learning activities (item 39) as the most important item (rank 1), participants in Factor B ranked experiential learning activities (item 39) as very unimportant (rank 39). Participants in Factor B also did not place as much importance on the person of the CE, such as genuineness (item 20), trustworthiness (item 31), and non-judgment (item 22), which were ranked as slightly more neutral than in Factor A.

Factor C: Investing in Students Professionally and Personally

Factor C explained 8.1% of the adjusted total observed variance with a composite reliability of .97 and a standard error of factor scores of .17. Fifteen participants (31%) loaded on this factor, and six of which loaded only on this factor. Participants who loaded on this factor identified as master's students taking classes full time, and most of these participants identified as being in their mid-twenties (range = 22-28), female, and White/European American. Participants that exclusively loaded on this factor were less variable than the study sample. The distinguishing statements for this factor are listed in Table 2.

Unlike any other factor in this study, participants in Factor C showed a clear, outlying preference for a single item, CE investment in students both professionally and personally (item 11), which had a Z-score of 2.037. Many participants provided comments that affirmed this valuation:

I want a counselor educator [who] is invested in my education and in me on a professional level because they can help guide me in the right direction based on my interests and on a personal level because I feel I have been successful in my program through the mentoring I have from one of my professors.

And:

One of the biggest differences I see between my undergraduate and my graduate education is that my professors sincerely care about me and my development in both a personal and professional way. It's that extracurricular, additional, above-and-beyond level of support I've received that really sets apart outstanding faculty.

The person of the CE was clearly highlighted in Factor C through participants' high ranking of the CE's ability to create emotional safety in the learning environment (item 3), passion (item 25), empathy (item 18), self-awareness (item 29), trustworthiness (item 31), respect (item 28), and valuation of many perspectives (item 40). Another participant commented, "To me the relationship in the classroom between student and professor is a partnership [in] which, each can openly share and engage with one another. That to me is one of the most essential qualities in the classroom." Participants who shared this perspective also valued self-awareness and reflection: "Because self-awareness is important to me, and my professors highly encourage us to reflect on our lives and work through our issues while modeling this healthy behavior themselves, that was very important to me."

Similar to Factor B, participants in Factor C did not place much importance on experiential learning activities. However, clearly unlike participants in Factor B, participants in Factor C did not necessarily need CEs to be highly accessible (item 13), organized (item 24) or clear in their requirements (item 4). One participant spoke directly to the minimal need for clarity: "My educators now often don't make assignments and requirements clear, and I am still able to use my best judgment to complete things in a way I see necessary. It leaves room for creativity." And another participant noted, "I have had very effective counselor educators that were not particularly organized – but helped me critically think about the information and engaged me in the process."

Factor D: Facilitating Student Skill Development

Factor D explained 5.9% of the adjusted total observed variance with a composite reliability of .92 and a standard error of factor scores of .28. Ten participants (21%) loaded on this factor, of which two participants loaded on this factor only. The participants whose sorts loaded on only Factor D were White/European, heterosexual females who identified as humanistic/existential with no clinical experience. The distinguishing statements for this factor are listed in Table 2.

Participants in Factor D highly valued the aspects of teaching that were directly applicable to their work as counselors. They placed high importance on CEs' use of experiential learning activities (item 39), practical application of concepts (item 34), effective constructive feedback (item 33), up-to-date knowledge (item 36). One participant noted, "Learning outside textbooks makes the material stick and become adaptable in real situations. Simple regurgitating material memorized from the books will not help us become competent and knowledgeable counsellors [sic]." They also valued CEs' engagement in clinical practice outside of teaching (item 41) and their personal experiences (item 35) that inform their teaching. Notably, Factor D participants were the only group that ranked the gatekeeping role of CEs (item 15) and CEs' assistance in connecting students with resources as important. Regarding resources, one participant stated, "Thinking about being a new clinician in a few short years, I want to have professional resources for myself as well as everyday resources that would benefit my clients."

Discussion & Implications

Whereas most of the dialogue regarding teaching in counselor education has explored behavioral dimensions of CE's teaching practices, the findings of this study support dispositional aspects of CEs that impact the teaching and learning environment. The findings of this study

support Malott, Hall, Sheely-Moore, Krell, and Cardaciotto's (2014) attention to characteristics of educators that contribute to effective learning environments from evidence-based teaching literature. This study confirms the belief that there are multiple perspectives on what makes an effective CE. Specifically, we identified the presence of four distinct perspectives on effective teaching.

Study participants valued the person of the CE across multiple factors in this study. CEs can convey respect, authenticity, and trustworthiness to their students in ways that create an environment conducive to students' self-exploration, as is suggested in the *CACREP Standards* (2016) and *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014). The dispositions participants valued in CEs' teaching aligns with literature about characteristics of effective counselors (Pope & Kline, 1999). Regardless of CEs' engagement in clinical practice beyond their faculty responsibilities, CEs model behaviors that are consistent with the counseling profession, which students seem to highly value.

The study also uncovered two interesting findings beyond the factors: research and self-directed learning. Generally, participants across all factors in this study perceived CE engagement in research (item 7) and support for self-directed learning (item 37) to be highly unimportant. Regarding CE research, one participant noted, "I've found that professors can be more focused on teaching and helping their students learn when they are not spending so much of their time doing their own research." Moreover, many participants indicated that they were not interested in research. One participant noted, "I do not personally care whether educators engage in research. I care much more about their ability to practically apply counseling concepts in the field." Students may have misconceptions about the ways research can support the work of clinicians.

Self-directed learning, in the literature, is related to student autonomy and internal motivation to learn (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). Nearly half of the study participants were in the early phases of their professional development (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2013) and may be uncomfortable with independent learning. They may have interpreted self-directed learning to mean independent learning or a hands-off approach on the CE's part, as one participant noted, "I am someone who prefers guidance, which is why self-directed learning would not fit my needs and work with the way I learn."

Limitations

Q methodology is an exploratory approach with the objective of identifying the presence of unique factors (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This study aimed to identify student perspectives rather than to generalize findings to the whole population of students or CEs. The study sample's diversity was limited regarding personal and professional characteristics. Despite the unequal subgroupings regarding gender and race/ethnicity, the study sample may be representative of the population of counseling students as a whole. Students' perspectives were adequately represented; however, likely, the perspectives of other subgroups were not. Additionally, only participants who responded quickly to the solicitation e-mails were represented and may indicate a non-response bias. Participants may have been motivated by compensation or more likely to check their e-mail, rather than those students who do not.

Additionally, there were cross-loadings among factors. From a philosophical perspective, this is expected as the factor analysis was conducted on participants' reported preferences rather than items in an objective measure; otherwise stated, participants' preferences in this study were multidimensional and complex. It is common for individuals to hold complex beliefs that do not neatly comply with statistical analyses.

Implications

Student preferences in this study support the use of pedagogical tools that engage students in their learning processes. CEs may enhance students' engagement by utilizing dynamic teaching methods. Hybridized course structures, that is, courses that utilize both face-to-face and online course management platforms, have been effective at creating greater student engagement (Renfro-Michel, O'Halloran, & Delaney, 2010). Moran and Milsom (2015) discussed using the flipped classroom technique in a counselor education course to increase instructor-student engagement in the classroom with highly interactive experiential learning activities. CEs have used experiential learning activities in multicultural courses (Villalba & Redmond, 2008), addictions courses (Warren, Hof, Mcgriff, & Morris, 2012), and expressive arts courses (Ziff & Beamish, 2004) to benefit learning outcomes.

Students valued constructive feedback, clarity of expectations, and organization. Individualized feedback from educators enhances student learning (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010) and self-efficacy and diminishes students' anxiety (Daniels & Larson, 2001). CEs can provide students with feedback on skills practice and academic assignments. Pietrzak et al. (2008) suggested that CE organization was the third most important dimension of students' evaluations of teaching effectiveness, after CEs' knowledge base and delivery style. Taken together, these findings imply that students value CEs' thoughtful preparation of courses.

Participants ranked CE engagement in research as the least important. Research is a common role of CEs (CACREP, 2016; ACA, 2014) and may comprise a substantial portion of CE's work activities in some positions and settings. However, students in this study did not see a practical connection between CE research and teaching. CEs can address students' indifference toward research by intentionally and explicitly addressing the role research plays in moving the

profession forward. Courses that include practical applications to treatment interventions may be ideal for integrating an assignment identifying and evaluating evidence-based practices. Many students may hold negative perceptions of research or hold professional stereotypes regarding the roles of mental health professionals. CEs can improve students' attitudes toward research by helping students breakdown their misconceptions and make an effort to teach them about applied research methods that are highly applicable to their fieldwork.

Future Research

This research study leads to a strategic opportunity to examine CEs' perspectives on teaching in counselor education. A follow-up study could utilize Q to examine CEs' preferences for their teaching dispositions. By using the same Q set that was created for this study, a comparison of students' and CEs' perspectives could elucidate both sides of the educational process.

Further studies may address students' preferences related to teaching and learning strategies. Additionally, researchers may examine students' perspectives associated with the four factors established by this study. Researchers could use quantitative approaches to develop measures of teaching effectiveness specific to counselor education.

Future research that builds on this study should address diversity issues of the sample. Whereas 93% of the participants of this study were master's students, doctoral students are not well represented; future studies can address this population. Despite efforts to diversify sampling, the cultural and ethnic diversity reported in this study was limited, and the perspectives of marginalized populations may not be represented. Future studies may focus on perceptions and learning needs of these populations and contribute to the pedagogical foundation for multicultural counselor education.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest possibilities to enhance the preparation of CEs as well as the practice of teaching in counselor education. In addition to behavioral characteristics, students value the dispositional characteristics of CEs. This supports the need for counselor education and supervision programs to emphasize the personal and professional development for CEs. CEs can make teaching practice decisions and engage in professional development to enhance learning in their courses.

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