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CACREP's Relevance to Effective Implementation of Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Abstract

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Cynthia Lee Taylor

MA, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1991

BS, Bowie State University, 1988

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Counselor Education and Supervision

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Abstract

Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (CSCP) are data driven programs utilized by school counselors to ensure the students they serve receive measurable benefits in academic, career, and personal/social development. The purpose of this study was to better understand if differences existed in the perceptions of graduates from school counseling programs accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and non-accredited programs regarding effective implementation of CSCP. This study is relevant to counselor educators, university administrators, and aspiring school counselors who are stakeholders in the decision to pursue CACREP accreditation or attend a CACREP accredited school counseling program. The theoretical foundation used to guide the study was competency based education (CBE), which emphasizes student competencies. Using a quantitative, contrasted groups design, the answers to 4 research questions were answered utilizing 132 school counselors who completed the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS). The participants' scores on the SCPIS were analyzed using a t test to compare the means of the 2 groups. The results indicated no statistically significant difference between the 2 groups regarding their perception of effectively implementing CSCP (RQ1),being professionally oriented to CSCP (RQ2), providing school counseling services (RQ3), or using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP (RQ4). The social change implications for this study include imparting the importance of school counseling masters' level students receiving the knowledge and training to effectively implement a CSCP, regardless of the program's CACREP status.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Gretchen Vann Taylor and the late Col. Alvin Taylor, Jr.

From a very early age, my parents instilled in me the importance of education. Both of my parents have their master's degrees and the expectation was that my sister and I would reach for the same level of academic competency. After successfully completing my first quarter at Walden University, my father passed away. He was able to express how proud he was of me before he died and I continued on in the program with his loving guidance in my heart. My mother has been with me every step of the way during my doctoral journey; she has shared in all my highs and lows and has been my strongest supporter. It is due to my parents that I have thrived in life and I owe everything to them.

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I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Shelley Jackson for her steadfast and unwavering support of me throughout the dissertation process. Dr. Jackson excelled at going above and beyond as my dissertation chair and I am so grateful to her. I would also like to thank my committee member, Dr. Jonathan Gray whose expertise in the school counseling field was instrumental in ensuring the success of my dissertation. Additionally, I am very grateful to Dr. Laura Haddock, my University Research Reviewer (URR) who gave me the support and constructive criticism necessary to complete my dissertation.

In addition to my committee and parents, I thank all of my family and friends who supported me. My sister, Cheryl Taylor Sims, offered much guidance, reflection, and prayers not only during my dissertation phase, but through my entire doctoral journey. My best friend, Debra Morrisey, lent her ear to listen, her shoulder for me to cry on, and her heart to share her love throughout my entire doctoral journey.

I would like to thank the school counselors and state presidents of school counselor associations who participated in my data collection by taking the survey and/or forwarding it to participating school counselors.

Above all else, I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

School counselors implement comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP) consistent with standards set forth by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (ASCA, 2012). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) offers accreditation to school counseling graduate programs that meet minimum standards of the counseling profession. CACREP provides school counseling masters training programs with specific standards and curriculum for students to meet the needs of a diverse student population utilizing current trends in school counseling (CACREP, 2015). CSCP, therefore, often reflect the school counseling CACREP standards and in turn are designed so school counselors can meet the needs of all students rather than the needs of some students.

Both CACREP and ASCA mandate that school counselors move from an individual, service-centered approach to a comprehensive approach (ASCA, 2012; CACREP, 2015). Examples of an individual or service-centered approach to school counseling include seeing students on an as needed basis (Mitkos & Bragg, 2008) or providing programming to a select group of students (McKillip, Rawls, & Barry, 2012). CSCP entails implementing a school counseling program that reaches all students. School counselors design, coordinate, implement, manage, and evaluate their school counseling programs to ensure that it is meeting the needs of each student (ASCA, 2012). Evidence of accountability of school counselors is the move to an increased focus on preparing school counselors to demonstrate effectiveness through competencies for school

counselors including effectively implementing CSCP (Brott, 2006). National and state counseling organizations advocate for CSCP and serve as a foundation for effective delivery of effective school counseling programs (Pyne, 2011). In this chapter, I provide an introduction and overview of the study, including background information, the problem, purpose, and research questions.

Background of the Study

A total of 251 graduate school counseling training programs are CACREP accredited and 14 graduate school counseling training programs are in the application process for CACREP accreditation (CACREP, 2014). The 2016 CACREP standards reflect an increase from the 48 semester hour/72 quarter hour requirement for graduate school counseling programs to a 60 semester hour/90 quarter hour requirement effective July 1, 2020 (CACREP, 2015). Currently there is much variation from state to state regarding requirements to become a school counselor; variations from state to state range from 18 to 48 semester hour requirements to become state certified in school counseling (Milsom & Akos, 2007). ASCA (2013) provided a comprehensive list of state requirements to become a school counselor that highlights the variation from state to state. The CACREP increase in credit hour supersedes each state's requirement for school counselors; therefore, CACREP's increase in credit hours for school counseling programs is significant. School counseling holds an important part in the history of CACREP. Since its inception in 1981, ASCA has been a major contributor to the development and evolution of CACREP standards and accountability structure (Bobby, 2013).

In previous research on CACREP's relevance to CSCP, Adams (2006) found a strong indication that graduates of CACREP accredited general programs score significantly higher on the National Counselor Examination (NCE) which led her to support the concept of CACREP as a national standard of academic excellence. Specific to school counseling, Milsom and Akos (2007) found that graduates of CACREP accredited programs scored significantly higher on the NCE than graduates of non-CACREP accredited programs. Additionally, while pursuit of the National Certified School Counselor (NCSC) credential was more evident in graduates of non-CACREP accredited programs than CACREP accredited programs, more graduates of CACREP accredited programs actually obtained the NCSC credential compared to of graduates of non-CACREP accredited programs (Milsom & Akos, 2007). No state requires school counselors take the NCE or NSCE; these exams are voluntary (ASCA, 2013). While there is evidence that graduates of CACREP accredited school counseling programs score higher on national counseling exams and pursue specialized school counseling credentials, an extensive review of the literature revealed an absence of information examining whether graduates of CACREP accredited programs perceive their graduate training as relevant to their implementation of CSCP.

Problem Statement

As changes in the credit hour requirement for CACREP accreditation were being discussed, there was much discussion in the school counseling community. While Bradley Erford, past president of the American Counseling Association, wrote a letter supporting the proposed changes (ACA, 2013), many counselor educators were not as

forthcoming with support. Erford, who was in support of the increase in credit hours for school counselors, discussed how the increase would result in counselors who were "better trained and more highly qualified than professional counselors who have graduated from other program areas (those that require 48 credits) (ACA, 2013, para. 3). Further, counselor educators working in CACREP or non-CACREP programs are charged with encouraging the highest standards among counselors in training (Milsom & Akos, 2005). These changes have been made; however, there is no data that supports that CACREP standards prepare school counselors to implement CSCP. The problem is that school counselors need to be prepared to implement CSCP, but it is unknown whether the CACREP standards help them to do this.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to fill the gap and better understand the difference between the independent variable of graduation from a CACREP accredited school counseling programs and the dependent variable of school counselor's perception of effectively implementing CSCP.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions

In order to examine whether a difference existed between CACREP standards and school counselor's preparedness to implement CSCP, the following research questions were investigated:

RQ1: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of effectively

implementing CSCP as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS)?

RQ2: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of being professionally oriented to CSCP as measured by the programmatic orientation subscale of the SCPIS?

RQ3: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of providing school counseling services as measured by the school counseling services subscale of the SCPIS?

RQ4: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP as measured by the computerized data subscale of the SCPIS?

Hypotheses

Null ($H_0$1): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding implementing comprehensive school counseling programs effectively as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$1): There is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding implementing comprehensive school counseling programs effectively as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Null ($H_0$2): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding being professionally oriented to CSCP as measured by the professional orientation subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$2): There is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding being professionally oriented to CSCP as measured by the professional orientation subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Null ($H_0$3): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding providing school counseling services as measured by the school counseling subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$3): There is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding providing school counseling services as measured by the school counseling subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Null ($H_0$4): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP as measured by the computerized subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$4): There is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP as measured by the computerized subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation guiding the study was competency based education (CBE) theory (Thompson, 1977). CBE theory is a system of organizing, evaluating, and managing instruction. CBE theory emphasizes student outcomes or competencies, instruction leading to student outcomes/competencies, evaluation of student outcomes, and program improvement to enhance student achievement. Further, CBE theory is based on objective standards from which students can be taught the curriculum to achieve outcome mastery. CACREP standards are designed to guide counselor education programs so that graduates from accredited programs will have mastered the necessary skills and knowledge to practice effectively; therefore, CBE is the impetus for CACREP curriculum that embodies standards education. Using CBE theory as a lens, I investigated school counselors' success with implementing CSCP. I discussed the theoretical foundation further in chapter two.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study was a quantitative, contrasted groups design. The contrasted-groups design focuses on inferences of the independent variable on the dependent variable utilizing two intact groups (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The independent variable was CACREP accreditation, and the dependent variable was

school counselor's perceived perception of implementing CSCP as measured by the SCPIS. The two groups studied included graduates from CACREP and non-CACREP accredited graduate school counseling training programs and were not subject to manipulation in the study. Participants completed the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS), which measured the extent of their perceived ability or preparedness to implement the CSCP.

Definitions

American School Counselor Association (ASCA): A professional organization that supports school counselors' professional development and is the school counseling division of the American Counseling Association (ASCA, 2012; ASCA, 2016).

ASCA National Model: A framework for a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program (ASCA, 2012).

Competency Based Education Theory: A theoretical framework based on objective teaching standards that emphasize student outcomes of mastery (Thompson, 1977).

Comprehensive School Counseling Programming (CSCP): A school counseling program that is driven by student data and based on standards of academic, career, and personal/social development that promote and enhance the learning process for all students (ASCA, 2012).

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP): An accrediting body that develops standards and procedures for counseling programs (CACREP, 2014).

Assumptions

There were several assumptions guiding this study. One assumption was that

practicing school counselors have basic knowledge of CSCP. A second assumption was

that school counselors have the support of their administration to implement CSCP. A

third assumption was that school counselors who participated in this study provided an

honest assessment of their implementation of CSCP. Additionally, the data was analyzed

using the *t* test for independent samples; the three assumptions underlying this statistical

test are: observations in both samples must be independent, the two populations from

selected samples must be normally distributed, and the samples must have equal variance

(Green & Salkind, 2011).

Scope and Delimitations

This study investigated the impact of graduating from a CACREP accredited

school counseling program and practicing school counselors' perceptions of

implementing comprehensive school counseling programs. Delimitations are choices that

the researcher makes that might affect the study. The method of selection of the sample

of participating school counselor was a delimitation. I selected school counselors who

have graduated from their school counseling program in 2003 or later. The ASCA

National Model was first published in 2003; graduates prior to 2003 regardless of their

school's CACREP accreditation status may not have received training on CSCP during

their graduate training. School counselors who graduated prior to 2003 may have gained

proficiency in implementing CSCP through personal pursuit, continuing education,

involvement in school counseling organizations, or through an introduction from peers or supervisors; however, they were not be eligible to participate in this study.

Limitations

Limitations are extraneous factors not accounted for in the design. For example, school counselors may be capable of effective delivery of CSCP; however, without the support of school administrators, the expected outcome may not be evident. While the research questions sought to ascertain school counselors' perceptions of their implementation of CSCP, a limitation in data collection was ensuring that school counselors rated themselves and their abilities honestly. While the hope was that school counselors answered the questions honestly, the anonymity of participation prevented assurance of the validity of their responses. An ample sample size assists in reducing limitations; a large sample size is more representative of the population, limiting the influence of outliers or extreme observations (Creswell, 2009).

Significance of the Study

The study was significant in that it may be relevant to counselor educators, university administrators, and aspiring school counselors. Counselor educators in non-CACREP school counseling programs may use this study to assist in making the decision to pursue CACREP accreditation. University administrators may use this study to justify the time and expense of pursuing CACREP accreditation for their school counseling programs. Finally, aspiring school counselors may use this study to decide if they will receive their graduate training from a CACREP accredited school counseling program.

In this study, I provided an overview of the latest trends in school counseling and its impact on K-12 student achievement. School counselors' duties are often ambiguous and inconsistent; this study may potentially add to the literature on the benefits of school counselors adopting comprehensive school counseling programs that will benefit the students' served. Additionally, now that the 2016 CACREP credit hour increase has passed, school counseling programs that currently offer 48/72 hour programs can use empirical evidence to assist in determining if they will comply with the new standards of 60/90 hours to maintain their CACREP accreditation status. Positive social change implications include information to improve the professional accountability of school counselors and counselor educators.

Summary

School counseling has a more than 100 year history filled with changes to meet the unique needs of school counselors and the students they serve including the general acceptance of a comprehensive school counseling program as the professional standard. The recent changes to CACREP standards may directly affect graduate school counseling training programs regarding pursuing or maintaining CACREP accreditation. This study investigated whether differences existed between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of effectively implementing CSCP. In chapter two, I provide a review of the literature including CACREP's relevance to general and school counseling programs, CSCP benefits to students, state efforts towards implementing CSCP, and evaluation of the selected CSCP instrument for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

School counselors are expected to implement CSCP regardless of receiving their graduate training from a CACREP or non-CACREP program (Young & Kaffenberger, 2011). A problem exists because school counselors are often unprepared to implement CSCP (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009). Even though the CACREP standards include specific standards addressing the implementation of CSCP, there is currently lack of information about if graduate programs adequately prepare school counselors to implement CSCP and if CACREP programs prepare graduates better than non-CACREP programs. Therefore, a study exploring practicing school counselors' perceptions regarding their preparedness to implement a CSCP was needed. As a response to this problem, I began an extensive search of the literature on the topic.

The literature reviewed on CACREP's relevance to preparing school counselors to implement CSCP contained limited information. The ensuing sections of this chapter encompass a description of the literature search strategy and competency based education (CBE) theory as the theoretical foundation. This is followed by information about the key concepts of CACREP, CSCP, and the ASCA National Model. The subsequent literature review overviewed previous research related to the problem statement including general counseling programs and CACREP's relevance, school counseling and CACREP's relevance, CSCP benefits to students, and state efforts towards implementing CSCP. Finally, the survey instrument was discussed relative to its ability to evaluate implementing CSCP. I concluded this chapter with a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

An exhaustive search was conducted by using research databases that included Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, and ERIC. Peer-reviewed journals of professional organizations such as the American Counseling Association, the American School Counselor Association, and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs served as additional sources for the literature review. Key terms used in the search were ASCA National Model, CACREP, competency based education, comprehensive school counseling, counselor preparation, professional standards, school counseling, and standards based education The Bureau of Labor Statistics, ASCA, and CACREP provided statistical information.

The literature reviewed includes a review of CACREP, which is the accrediting body that provides leadership and promotes excellence in the professional preparation of school counselors (CACREP, 2014). Furthermore, a review of CSCP is provided. The ASCA National Model provides the foundation of CSCP. The seven fundamental principles of school counseling theory provide the basis of the ASCA National Model (Henderson, 2005) and will be explained below. The theoretical foundation guiding this study, competency based education theory, will be expounded on below.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation guiding the study was competency based education (CBE) theory (Thompson, 1977). With an emphasis on student outcomes or competencies, CBE theory is based on a system of organizing, evaluating, and managing instruction. CACREP standards were developed around the theory of CBE. CACREP

standards emphasize outcomes and provide counseling training programs with guidelines (the standards) for a way of organizing, evaluating, and managing instruction. These standards help to advance the counseling profession though quality and excellence in counselor education based on a CBE model (CACREP, 2014). CACREP standards are written to ensure students develop the necessary professional skills to practice effectively by adhering to professional standards (CACREP, 2015). Therefore, a school counseling program that attains CACREP accreditation emphasizes student outcomes or competencies based on a system of organizing, evaluating, and managing instruction.

Proponents of CBE are concerned with how knowledge is transferred to students to ensure students obtain the necessary outcomes or competencies. The specific outcome or competency that was the focus of this study was school counselors' implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs. Thompson and Moffett (2008) conducted research that found school counselors in training are interested in learning about implementing CSCP; however, not all school counseling programs prepare future school counselors to develop, evaluate, or deliver a CSCP. Thompson and Moffett concluded that school counselor preparation programs should provide competency based course work designed to prepare school counselors to be educational leaders who can implement a data driven CSCP. School counselors should be able to articulate and demonstrate their knowledge (e.g., competencies) in their expected professional duties.

Gonczi (2013) has over 20 years of experience researching CBE and is a supporter of CBE. Gonczi described the concept of competence as an integrated approach and argued for a holistic or integrated competency-based approach to education and

training. Gonczi suggested that educators convey complex, real-world, and realistic competencies to students in order for them to be proficient in their professional application of their training.

CBE implementation challenges have been noted by researchers. Boahin and Hofman (2012) explored the perception of both students and faculty towards implementing a CBE training program. Results of Boahin and Hofman's research indicated that students generally perceived their supervised internships as more crucial in developing competence in their given field rather than their academic training. Similarly, Calhoun, Wrobel, and Finnegan (2011) noted that CBE has not completely evolved into an integrated educational experience to prepare graduate students to apply their training in the professional world. The merits of CBE have been noted; however, more time must be devoted to the transference of application knowledge from professor to student (Boahin & Hofman, 2012; Calhoun et al., 2011; Hassan, 2012). In this study, I focused on CACREP accreditation to help determine if a graduate training based on CBE assisted school counselors with implementing CSCP.

Key Variables and Concepts

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)

As an accrediting body since 1981, CACREP is committed to the development of standards and procedures that reflect the needs of a dynamic, diverse, and complex society (CACREP, 2014). CACREP has implemented standards and raised accountability of master's level graduate programs (Bobby & Kandor, 1992; CACREP, 2014). The 2016

CACREP standards indicate that school counselors shall receive graduate training in models of school counseling programs; the ASCA National Model is an example of a school counseling model. Further, to meet CACREP standards, programs must impart knowledge to students enabling them to have the knowledge to design, implement, manage, and evaluate programs that enhance the academic, career, and personal/social development of students. Moving beyond knowledge to application, CACREP standards mandate that school counseling training programs prepare students to design, implement, manage, and evaluate a comprehensive school counseling program (CSCP) (CACREP, 2015).

Content relative to the competencies a school counseling graduate program must contain remain relatively unchanged in the 2016 CACREP standards (CACREP, 2015). The 2016 CACREP standards seek for all entry level degree programs to offer a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 quarter credit hours. Currently, entry-level degree programs in addictions counseling, marriage, couple, and family counseling, and clinical mental health counseling are currently at the 60/90 credit hour status. The increase for school counseling, career counseling, and postsecondary counseling programs from 48/72 hours to 60/90 hours begins July 1, 2020; therefore, school counseling programs will need to meet the new minimum academic unit requirement of 60/90 credit hours (CACREP, 2015).

Some research has explored the importance of CACREP accreditation and school counseling practices focusing on the competency based education that counselor educators must impart to students by utilizing objective standards. The importance of the

2001 CACREP standards and school counseling was researched by Holcomb-McCoy, Bryan, and Rahill (2002); the study sought to determine school counselors' perceptions of CACREP standards relative to implementing school counseling standards. Research indicated that the 2001 standards were not consistent with school counselors' activities. Study participants indicated CACREP standards to be highly to very highly important to the practice of school counseling; however, program development was not perceived as an important aspect of school counseling. The authors noted a limitation of the study was a failure to obtain if participants graduated from a CACREP or non-CACREP school counseling program. The authors suggested future research determine if CACREP standards improve the quality of service provided by school counselors by determining if a relationship exists between graduation from a CACREP program and school counselor effectiveness.

The difference between Holcomb-McCoy et al. (2002) research and this study was the former study sought school counselors' perceptions of CACREP standards. This study connected CACREP standards to school counselors' perceptions of their preparedness to implement CSCP. Further, as noted by Holcomb-McCoy's limitation, this study obtained if participants graduated from a CACREP or non-CACREP school counseling program.

Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (CSCP)

Comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP) are school counseling programs that are driven by student data and based on standards of academic, career, and personal/social development that promote and enhance the learning process for all

students (ASCA, 2012). Brown and Trusty (2005) noted that the nature of CSCP is to be inclusive of strategic interventions designed to assist students with academic excellence, enhance personal growth, and promote career development. Student data is collected and analyzed enabling school counselors to develop and guide their CSCP (Young & Kaffenberger, 2011). When highly trained, professional school counselors implement CSCP, their students receive measurable benefits (Lapan, 2012). If school counselors are trained adequately to implement a CSCP, then students would appear to benefit; however, few studies have addressed school counselors' perceptions about their preparedness to implement a CSCP as a result of their graduate training program. Therefore, in this study, sought to ascertain quantitative evidence if a difference existed between CACREP school counseling programs adequately preparing their graduates to effectively implement a CSCP.

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model

The ASCA National Model is an example of CSCP. ASCA released the ASCA National Model in 2003, and it has been revised in 2005 and 2012. The model provides school counselors with a framework to connect student achievement data to the mission of their schools (ASCA, 2012). Effective implementation of the ASCA National Model is contingent upon school counselors changing outdated practices, learning new skills, and designing and implementing program evaluation and action research to demonstrate effectiveness (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008). Studer, Diambra, Breckner, and Heidel (2011) noted extensive training in the ASCA National Model is a programmatic, collaborative, and preventative approach to school counseling that is consistent with the

identity and the philosophy of school counselors (Walsh, Barrett, & DePaul, 2007). The ASCA National Model provides school counselors with a detailed framework from which to develop, manage, and assess a CSCP.

The ASCA National Model was created to connect school counseling to current educational reform movements that emphasize student achievement and success (ASCA, 2012). School counselors develop and implement CSCP based on the ASCA National Model that aligns with the school and district's mission. The ASCA National Model includes prevention, education, collaboration, and is part of an integrated total education program that is data driven (ASCA, 2012). While implied, specific language addressing the ASCA National Model have been removed from the 2016 CACREP standards; however, previous CACREP standards discussed the importance of the ASCA National Model and its integral relationship to the total education program as part of foundation knowledge for school counselors in training (CACREP, 2009). The seven fundamental principles of school counseling theory that support the ASCA National Model will be described next.

The seven fundamental principles of school counseling theory that support the ASCA National Model as a conceptual framework are: (1) all children and adolescents benefit from structured activities related to their academic, career, and personal/social development, (2) all children and adolescents benefit from interventions aimed at promoting their academic, career, and personal/social development, (3) some children and adolescents may need more support in accomplishing academic, career, and personal/social development tasks, (4) school counselors as child and adolescent

specialists are qualified to make valuable contributions to children and adolescents'

academic, career, and personal/social development, (5) school counselors can assist with

closing gaps between specific students through program design and delivery, (6) school

counselors implement interventions enabling children and adolescents to acquire and

apply skills in the areas of academic, career, and personal/social development, and (7)

school counselors can collaborate with other adults to enhance children and adolescents'

academic, career, and personal/social development (Henderson, 2005).

Previous Research Related to the Problem Statement

General Counseling Programs and CACREP's Relevance

Reviewing previous research that has compared CACREP graduate programs and

non-CACREP programs provided a place to begin when investigating the present

problem. This study specifically investigated school counselors' perceptions concerning

their preparedness to implement a CSCP delineated by if they attended a CACREP or

non-CACREP graduate program. The literature below provides a frame of reference

concerning the comparison of CACREP and non-CACREP programs.

In 2009, Boes, Snow, and Chibbaro noted the lack of literature related to

graduates of CACREP versus non-CACREP programs and commented that much of what

does exist is outdated. There is an existing body of literature that has investigated why

programs do not purse accreditation. Bobby and Kandor (1992) for example conducted a

quantitative study surveying counselor educators about the hindrances programs face that

kept them from seeking CACREP accreditation. Their findings included barriers of the

600 clock-hour internship and the student-to-faculty ratios set by CACREP. Other

identified concerns were the 48 semester/72 quarter hour requirement, the requirement of 2 full-time faculty members [currently 3 full-time faculty members] in an individual program, and the 20-1 [now 10-1] advisor/advisee ratio.

Although dated, one of the few studies that compared CACREP versus non-CACREP programs was completed by Hollis in 1998. He sought to ascertain if CACREP accreditation made a difference in the preparation of counselors. Specifically, Hollis compared CACREP accredited mental health programs with those not accredited to determine if CACREP made a difference in graduation rates, graduation requirements, clinical practicum hours, and job placement rates. Findings included that CACREP accredited programs graduated more students than non-accredited programs, graduation requirements were more stringent for CACREP accredited programs, an average of 30% more clinical practicum hours were required in CACREP accredited programs, and graduates of CACREP programs were able to secure more advantageous jobs or advanced graduate placement than non-CACREP graduates.

More recently, Adams (2006) studied the effect CACREP accreditation had on student knowledge in the core counseling areas as assessed by the National Counselor Examination (NCE). Study participants were randomly selected from the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) database from a five year period. Adams used an ANOVA to differentiate between CACREP and non-CACREP scores; two random samples resulted in statistical significance (p=.000) indicating that graduates of CACREP accredited programs scored higher on the NCE than graduates of non-CACREP

accredited programs. A suggestion for future research was to evaluate NCE scores with actual competence in the field.

These studies indicated that there were measurable differences between graduates of CACREP programs and non-CACREP programs. Previous studies indicated that graduation from a CACREP program provided many benefits. A trend in these studies was the suggestion for future research to differentiate CACREP's relevance to the actual performance of counseling duties.

School Counseling and CACREP's Relevance

School counseling holds an important part in the history of CACREP. Since its inception in 1981, ASCA has been a major contributor to the development and evolution of CACREP standards and accountability structure (Bobby, 2013). As noted by CACREP (2014), accreditation is a unique peer review system of quality assurance. CACREP standards intent is for programs to review their programs against CACREP standards to ensure students receive a quality educational experience.

Attention to CACREP school counseling standards is somewhat newer and is important to this study. Diambra et al. (2011) beguiled counselor educators to review and consider revamping their training programs to be in line with CACREP standards so that students would graduate being fully prepared to implement CSCP. Over ten years ago, Hayes and Paisley (2002) demonstrated how their graduate counseling program was restructured to be in accordance with CSCP by using the CACREP school counseling standards to guide the program's curriculum changes. These authors demonstrated how the CACREP standards and the ASCA National Model were used to ensure the content

and practice of school counseling was effectively implemented in the training of school counselors. One of the important changes in the curriculum was that it mirrored the importance of a move from individual responsive services for some students to comprehensive programming for all students as mandated by the ASCA National Model and supported by the CACREP school counseling standards.

Research has compared important differences in school counseling graduate programs that are CACREP accredited and those that are not. For example, Milsom and Akos (2005) examined archival data to determine CACREP's relevance to the professionalism of school counselors. Specifically, the authors conducted a chi-square analysis and descriptive statistics in order to examine relationships between CACREP accreditation and three areas of professionalism (professional contributions, leadership, and credentials. Analysis of the data revealed proportionally more counselor educators from CACREP programs authored journal articles on school counseling, but more counselor educators from non-CACREP programs presented on school counseling topics at conferences. Leadership in school counselor education by counselor educators from CACREP programs was almost double that of counselor educators from non-CACREP programs. Lastly, counselor educators from CACREP programs held more counseling credentials (e.g., NCC, LPC/LMHC) than counselor educators from non-CACREP programs. This study was significant to my study as one of the positive social change implications was to include information to improve the professional accountability of school counselors and counselor educators.

Attention has been given to how to train effective school counselors, and some research (Brott, 2006) appeared to lend support for school counseling graduate programs that are CACREP accredited. In her study, Brott discussed an action research project undertaken to demonstrate a disciplined process of inquiry to improve counselor education practice for training an effective professional school counselor. The author used the 2001 CACREP standards and the ASCA National Model to develop a framework to provide effective training of school counselors.

Brott's action research project related to my study as she developed the framework to raise the accountability standards for professional school counselors. Now that CACREP has increased the program hour requirement (48 semester/72 quarter) to (60 semester/90 quarter), it is imperative that the teaching and learning obtained in counselor education programs effectively prepare school counselors in training to be effective practitioners who can perform all expected functions, including implementing CSCP.

Throughout the United States, a disparity exists in the school counseling profession. Milsom and Akos (2007) provided a description of this disparity and wanted to determine if graduates of CACREP accredited school counseling programs had an advantage over graduates of non-CACREP programs regarding the attainment of professional certification (e.g., NCC, NCSC). They reported that each state could set their criteria for school counseling certification. Differences existed between states concerning the total number of graduate credit hours that are required to become certified school counselors. School counseling certification also varies state by state in terms of the

number of years of teaching experience that are required or if teaching experience is required at all. These state by state differences were often cited as being detrimental to school counselors communicating a consistent identity. To address the issue of professional identity and unification, ASCA has engaged in efforts to establish a unified voice, role definition, and self-advocacy for school counselors throughout the United States.

In addition to the efforts of ASCA to unify the school counseling profession, CACREP standards may offer the school counseling profession with a means to form a more unified allegiance. Milsom and Akos (2007) noted the rigorous regulatory nature of CACREP and used archived data to conduct chi-square analyses, *t* test, and descriptive statistics to examine the potential difference among school counselors who graduated from CACREP and non-CACREP training programs. They found graduates of CACREP school counseling programs scored significantly higher on the NCE than graduates of non-CACREP school counseling programs. Additionally, while pursuit of the NCSC credential was more evident in graduates of non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs (n = 1,972) than CACREP accredited school counseling programs (n = 268), 88% of graduates of CACREP accredited school counseling programs actually obtained the NCSC credential compared to 52% of graduates of non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs. While this study provided evidence that school counselors who graduate from CACREP programs fare better on national counseling exams, school counseling professional duties such as implementing CSCP were not explored by the authors.

Further expounding on the difficulties with school counselors presenting a unified professional identity and the potential for CACREP and the ASCA National Model to potentially provide positive solutions, many authors (Burkard, Gillen, Martinez, & Skytte, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012a; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012b; Walsh et al., 2007; Wilkerson, Pérusse, & Hughes, 2013), hold promise for the school counseling profession because it presents standards and expectations that can guide school counseling masters programs to meet a common set of standards and would promote a unified and consistent student experience across states and universities. Studies that demonstrate that students are more prepared to implement a CSCP would reinforce the importance of CACREP accreditation are discussed next.

Branthoover, Desmond, and Bruno (2010) conducted a study that demonstrated the importance of CACREP accreditation in the training of school counselors. They described how one CACREP accredited school counseling program exposed students to all facets of CACREP standards, including the standards that address the implementation of CSCP. Course activities and class work were designed to show students how to apply CACREP standards in real-world school counseling activities. One required course in the curriculum was titled *Management of a Professional School Counselor Program,* which was designed specifically to prepare school counselors in training to develop, implement, and evaluate a CSCP.

While the previous study (Branthoover et al., 2010) discussed how a program that is CACREP accredited exposed students to the application of a CSCP in real-world situations, Pyne (2011) sought to determine if the implementation of CSCP led to school

counselors' job satisfaction. School counselor job satisfaction may be the result of the individual school counselor's feelings of competence. For example, school counselors who feel prepared to implement a CSCP may experience higher job satisfaction; therefore, Pyne's job satisfaction study will be described below.

In this study (Pyne, 2011), 351 school counselors from Michigan public schools were invited to participate in the study and 117 (33.3%) responded. Participants completed the following instruments: (1) The Comprehensive School Counseling Implementation Measure (CSCIM); and (2) The Job in General (JIB) scale. Results revealed a moderate-to-strong relationship does exist between implementing CSCP and job satisfaction. Specifically, school counselors reported higher levels of job satisfaction when they have administrative support, communication between faculty and staff, and have clearly written and directive philosophies. In addition, job satisfaction was related to the ability of the school counselor to serve all students in the school and the school counselor was able to take time for program, planning, and evaluation. These results were consistent with the application of CSCP, which is characteristic of a school counselor serving all students, with high communication between faculty and staff, and support from administration. CSCPs also require time for program, planning, and evaluation. Pyne demonstrated that school counselors with high job satisfaction were successfully implementing CSCP. The problem, however, is that those counselors with low job satisfaction were not able to implement CSCP; in his study, the reasons why these counselors did not implement CSCP was not determined. The current study investigated

if school counselors from CACREP and non-CACREP programs are prepared to implement CSCP, which may be related to job satisfaction.

In a discussion about CACREP accreditation, it is important to describe how many graduates come from CACREP accredited programs. Three studies were identified which attempted to describe the number of graduates from CACREP programs in different areas of the United States. Boes et al. (2009) compared the number of graduates from CACREP accredited school counseling programs compared to graduates of non-CACREP accredited programs in Alabama. While CACREP accredited programs follow rigorous standards of preparation, non-CACREP programs establish their own curriculum. Faculty at non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs use their counseling experience, state mandates, and professional preferences to guide in their curriculum planning. The authors collected published data published by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). The number of graduates from non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs (57%) surpassed the number of graduates from CACREP accredited school counseling programs (43%). In Alabama, therefore, more practicing school counselors received their training from non-CACREP programs. As indicated by the authors, there are concerns about equivalent skills such as implementing CSCP. The current study explored differences between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perceived implementation of CSCP.

Two additional studies were conducted in the North Atlantic States (Boes, Snow, Hancock, and Chibbaro, 2010) and the Rocky Mountain Region (Hancock, Boes, Snow,

and Chibbaro, 2010) comparing graduation rates of school counselors from CACREP and non-CACREP school counseling programs. In both studies, the authors compared the number of graduates from CACREP accredited school counseling programs to graduates of non-CACREP accredited programs in their respective areas. The authors determined that there were more graduates from non-CACREP school counseling programs than graduates from CACREP accredited programs in the North Atlantic States (Boes et al, 2010). The Rocky Mountain Region had the largest percentage of CACREP accredited school counseling programs and the graduates of CACREP accredited school programs (52%) exceeded graduates of non-CACREP school counseling programs (48%) in the Rocky Mountain Region (Hancock et al., 2010). Knowing the numbers of school counselors who graduated from CACREP or non-CACREP school counseling programs provided insight into the variations in the United States. In addition to reporting the number of participants who graduated from CACREP or non-CACREP school counseling programs, the current study explored the participants' perception of their preparation to implement CSCP.

CSCP Benefits to Students

The American School Counselor Association supports the implementation of CSCP and CSCP have been carefully researched in order to provide data that CSCP benefits students. The following studies show that CSCP are beneficial to K-12 students (Burkard et al., 2012; Carey et al., 2012a; Carey et al., 2012b; Wilkerson et al., 2013). Students attending school in Wisconsin demonstrated statistically significant positive outcomes in academics, attendance, and graduation rates for schools that have

implemented CSCP (Burkard et al., 2012). Students attending schools in Nebraska have demonstrated increased student engagement, decreased disciplinary problems, and higher student achievement when CSCP was implemented (Carey et al., 2012a). Students attending schools in Utah experienced improved student outcomes when CSCP was implemented (Carey et al., 2012b). Finally, students attending schools in Indiana increased English and Math proficiency when CSCP was implemented (Wilkerson et al., 2013). These studies demonstrate the effectiveness of CSCP for increasing student achievement outcomes in schools.

Collaboration between school counselor educators, the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation (CSCORE), state directors of guidance, and state school counselor associations were investigated by Lapan (2012). The collaborative group worked diligently over the past decades to make CSCP a reality in schools in 6 states across the United States. Research indicated that far too many students attended schools where CSCP did not occur. They concluded that as a profession, school counseling needed to ensure that all students had access to high quality professional school counselors who effectively implemented CSCP. Challenges noted to implementing CSCP included high student-to-school ratio and implementation gaps. Model CSCP resulted in students achieving measurable benefits.

Sink, Akos, Turnbull, and Mvududu (2008) compared student achievement between Washington State middle schools with CSCP and those schools without CSCP. Results did not reveal a statistically significant difference between schools who had recently implemented CSCP and those that had not. However, when CSCP was

implemented for five years or more, those schools with CSCP outperformed schools without CSCP on various academic measures. The authors reasoned that CSCP required substantial implementation time in order to result in benefits to the students served.

State Efforts Towards Implementing CSCP

An investigation into individual state efforts to implement CSCP will be discussed next. Due to the variation between states in regard to school counseling certification requirements it is important to discuss these differences. Each state adopts requirements for school counselor requirements. Milsom and Akos (2007) found inconsistencies across the states regarding school counselor requirements. For example, graduate credit hour requirements for school counseling ranged from 18 to 48 hours and no state currently required that students graduate from a CACREP program. While CACREP provides school counseling program standards, these standards have recently changed. CACREP's increase from a 48 semester/72 quarter hour requirement to a 60 semester/90 quarter hour requirement for school counseling programs exceeds all state requirements (CACREP, 2013). The literature is silent on how this increase in graduate credit hour will affect school counseling programs or state certification requirements. Traditionally, however, researchers noted states' acceptance of the ASCA National Model as the standard for school counselors to follow (Burkard et al., 2012; Carey et al., 2012a; Carey et al., 2012b; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Wilkerson et al., 2013) and those standards are often incorporated into the state school counseling certification requirements. State requirements, for example require school counselors to be trained in human growth and development, theories, individual counseling, group counseling, social

and cultural foundations, testing and appraisal, research and program evaluation, professional orientation and career development (ASCA, 2016). The ASCA National Model has influenced training program standards in graduate schools as well as influencing school counselors' job evaluations.

School counselor evaluations often are based on the expectation of a CSCP. Burkard et al. (2012) noted that 43 states have implemented CSCP with 10 of those states having developed evaluation systems to evaluate school counselors' implementation of CSCP. Dahir et al. (2009) noted the influence the ASCA National Model has had in state departments of educations and state school counselor associations with many refining program guidelines to be aligned with the ASCA National Model. Research conducted by Dahir et al. (2009) revealed variations across schools regarding school counselors' attitudes, beliefs, and priorities regarding implementing CSCP and suggested that professional development for school counselors regarding effectively implementing CSCP would assist in state implementation efforts.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of CSCP (Instrumentation)

The effectiveness of CSCP has been noted above. For this study, Elsner and Carey's (2005) School Counseling Implementation Survey (SCPIS) will be utilized to evaluate school counselors' perceptions of their effective implementation of CSCP. The items on the SCPIS are written to reflect concrete and observable school counseling program features and allows researchers to obtain evidence of school counselors' delivery of CSCP (Carey et al., 2012b). Cronbach's alpha reliability estimates for subscales of the SCPIS are good and range from .79 to .87 (Clemens, Carey, &

Harrington, 2010). Content validity of the SCPIS is established; each of the 20 items on the SCPIS were designed to measure the extent to which school counselors implement comprehensive school counseling programs (Clemens et al., 2010).

Summary and Conclusions

Research has confirmed CSCP, as stipulated by the ASCA National Model, as a means for school counselors to fulfill their duties of providing an approach to students that enables them to attain optimal academic, career, and personal/social development. While research is limited on the evidence of CACREP's relevance to CSCP, there is an abundance of current literature indicating CSCP as efficacious for school counselors to utilize to maximize successful outcomes for students. As states move towards adoption of CSCP as the standard, there have been implementation challenges across the states. The following study may assist in determining CACREP's relevance to preparing school counselors to effectively implement CSCP.

In chapter two, I provided a review of the literature including CACREP's relevance to general and school counseling programs, CSCP benefits to students, state efforts towards implementing CSCP, and evaluation of the selected CSCP instrument for this study. In chapter three, I discuss the methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore differences between graduates of

CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their

perceived preparedness to implement a comprehensive school counseling program

(CSCP). This study examined the differences between graduates of CACREP and non-

CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of effectively

implementing CSCP as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation

Survey (SCPIS). As decisions are being made for graduate school counseling training

programs to pursue or maintain CACREP accreditation, this study may be used as a

factor in the decision making process.

I described the research methodology in this chapter. This chapter is organized to

include the following sections: the research design and rationale; methodology;

population; sampling and sampling procedures; procedures for recruitment, participation,

and data collection; instrumentation and operationalization of constructs; data analysis

plan; threats to validity; ethical procedures; and a summary of the chapter content.

Research Design and Rationale

The contrasted-groups design is a quasi-experimental design that is a variation of

experimental research where the random assignment of participants to comparison groups

is not required (Creswell, 2009; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Intact groups

are studied to determine the relationship of the independent variable on the dependent

variable (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). This approach is also an ex post facto

design where experimental manipulation or random assignment does not occur because events (graduation from a school counseling program) have already occurred (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). The independent variable in this study was CACREP accreditation, and the dependent variable was school counselors' perceived perception of implementing CSCP. The two groups studied (graduates from CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs) were intact groups. The difference of CACREP accreditation to school counselors' perceived perception of effective implementation of comprehensive school counseling programming was measured by the SCPIS.

To prepare for this study, I conducted a thorough analysis and assessment of the various research designs and methods available. The most appropriate design for this study was the contrasted-groups design, and the most appropriate research method was the survey method. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008), when it is not feasible to randomly assign participants of a study to comparison groups, the contrasted-groups design can be employed. Intact groups are studied to determine the relationship of the independent variable on the dependent variable. A strength of the contrasted-groups design is researchers can perform straightforward comparisons between groups utilizing the contrasted-groups design. A limitation of the contrasted-groups design is without random assignment to comparison groups, causal inferences can be vulnerable due to extraneous factors (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

Therefore, the rationale for utilizing the contrasted-groups design was justified. The two groups studied (graduates from CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school

counseling programs) were intact groups. The relationship of CACREP accreditation to school counselors' perceived perception of implementing CSCP was studied.

Methodology

Population

The target population of this study was school counselors employed in schools in the United States-who graduated from their master's program in 2003 or later. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) estimated that there are 281,400 school counselors in the United States; one subset of the population of school counselors, members of ASCA, reported school counselor membership in excess of 31,000 (ASCA, 2016). Study participants were professional school counselors who graduated from a master's level school counseling program in 2003 or later.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008), a sample should be as representative of the population as possible. The sample of school counselors provided the data to make inferences about the population of school counselors (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). In probability samples, each unit of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample; in nonprobability samples, there is not an equal chance of being included in the sample (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). In conducting this study, I utilized a convenience sample. Convenience samples are a type of nonprobability sample where sampling units are selected that are conveniently available (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Creswell (2009) noted that convenience samples may the best option for researchers due to the availability of

naturally formed groups. The invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix C) was emailed or posted to professional online mediums to school counselors and included informed consent, the voluntary nature of participation, and the anonymity of participation (however, if participants requested a summary of research results, they yielded their anonymity and confidentiality was be guaranteed) (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

I drew the sample from various online mediums; for example, ASCA SCENE is a professional online meeting place for school counseling professional members who are members of ASCA. Additional study participants were sought through various social media forums such as the CESNET listserv and the ASCA page on LinkedIn. The only exclusion criteria was the graduation year. Since the ASCA National Model was developed in 2003, only practicing school counselors who graduated from their school counseling program in 2003 and later were invited to participate in the study.

G*Power was used to determine the sample size. The alpha (α) level of the proposed study, or probability of making a Type I error, was .05 (5 %) which means there was a five percent chance an effect will be detected when there was none. The beta (β) level, the probability of making a type II error, or determining there was no effect on the population when one does exist, was set at .20 (20 %). Consequently, the power level (1-β), or ability to detect an effect, for the proposed study was .80 (80 %) which indicated an 80 percent chance of finding a statistically significant difference. Based on these values, G*Power approximated the necessary sample size at 128 for a (.20) effect size.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I recruited study participants by posting a notice on various professional social media forums and listservs. Additionally, I emailed the notice to each president of each state's school counseling association and asked them to distribute to their members; a link to each of the 50 state school counseling associations was located on the ASCA website. The notice included informed consent, the study description, a description of the survey, the purpose of the study, criteria for inclusion, the directions for completion, a statement concerning anonymity and voluntary participation, the risks associated with participation, a link to the survey, and the researcher's contact information. I posted a second request for participation, one week after the initial request and a third request for participation three weeks after the initial request. If I had not received sufficient responses in four weeks, I planned to email each member of ASCA and invite them to participate. As a member of ASCA, I had direct access to each member's email; however, I obtained the necessary number of participants prior to the end of the fourth week and did not need to utilize this step.

The demographic information collected included the year the school counselor graduated from their master's program and whether the master's program was CACREP accredited at the time of their graduation. Any surveys from participants who graduated prior to 2003 or who do not indicate their school's CACREP status at the time of their graduation were disregarded per the criteria.

A statement including detailed informed consent was provided with the recruitment letter (see Appendix C), preceding the start of the survey. Participants

indicated their consent by clicking the consent box, and completing and submitting the electronic survey. Study participants were directed to a link via Survey Monkey containing the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (see Appendix B for the authors' permission to use the survey and Appendix D for the survey). After the participants reviewed the details and provided consent, they completed the 20 item survey using a computer that will took approximately 10 minutes. Following completion of the study, I retrieved the data from the online medium.

After participants completed the study, they were thanked for their contribution and informed that this study will be available in ProQuest if the participants wished to inquire about the outcome after the completion of the study. There were no follow-up assessments or actions required of the study participants.

School counselors were invited and encouraged to participate by appealing to their altruism and convincing them of the significance of the study (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). All data was collected online. Utilizing the internet to distribute surveys assisted with obtaining a large sample of geographically dispersed participants (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The instrument I used in this study was the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS); a 20 item survey constructed on a 4-point Likert scale (Elsner & Carey, 2005). The time to complete the SCPIS did not exceed 10 minutes. Carey et al. (2012b) used the SCPIS in their research, *A statewide evaluation of the outcomes of the implementation of ASCA National Model school counseling programs in*

Utah high schools. The items on the SCPIS are written to reflect concrete and observable school counseling program features that allows researchers to obtain evidence of school counselors' delivery of CSCP (Carey et al., 2012b). Permission was obtained from both authors, David Elsner and John Carey, to use the SCPIS for this study; see Appendix A for the letter requesting permission and Appendix B for authors' permission.

Subscales of the SCPIS include program orientation, school counseling services, and computerized data use. The programmatic orientation subscale contains seven items reflecting the ASCA National Model features related to the planning, management, and accountability functions of a school counseling program (Carey et al., 2012b). The school counseling services subscale contains seven items reflecting school counselors' ability to deliver comprehensive services (Carey et al., 2012b). The computerized data analysis subscale contains three items reflecting school counselors' use of computer software to analyze student data (Carey et al., 2012b). The remaining item is related to school counselors' use of time which supports the ASCA National Model's directive for school counselors to spend at least 80% of their time on direct services to students (Carey et al., 2012b). The subscales represent aspects of the ASCA National Model. All items of the SCPIS were analyzed to answer the research questions. Clemens et al. (2010) instructed researchers to score responses to the SCPIS by calculating an overall score or by calculating the subscales; higher scores indicate a more fully implemented CSCP than lower scores. The SCPIS has been used extensively by researchers using online data collection including one of the developers of the instrument (e.g., Carey et al., 2012a; Carey et al., 2012b).

Content Validity

Content validity is concerned with the measurement instrument accurately measuring the variables being studied (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Each of the 20 items on the SCPIS was designed to measure the extent to which school counselors implement CSCP (Clemens et al., 2010). Further, each item reflects concrete, observable school counseling program characteristics (Clemens et al., 2010). ASCA (2016) expects graduates of school counseling programs to be proficient in delivering CSCP regardless of the program being CACREP or non-CACREP accredited; the SCPIS demonstrates a measure of the variables being studied.

Empirical Validity

Empirical validity involves the measuring instrument being a valid instrument (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Evidence for empirical validity of the SCPIS was supported by comparing it to the School Counseling Activity Rating Scale (SCARS) (Clemens et al., 2010). The SCARS was designed to measure school counselors' rating of how they would prefer to spend their time on job-related activities (Scarborough, 2005). Convergent and discriminant construct validity and was established for the SCARS subscales (Scarborough, 2005). The authors of the SCPIS and the SCARS used exploratory factor analysis as part of evaluating their instruments; the amount of variance explained by the factor structure on the SCARS is comparable to the SCPIS (Clemens et al., 2010).

Construct Validity

Construct validity is established when the measuring instrument is correlated to the theoretical foundation of the research experiment (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The theoretical foundation that guided this study was competency based education (CBE) theory that emphasizes student outcomes or competencies. The SCPIS measures school counselors' ability to implement CSCP as stipulated by the ASCA National Model. A school counselor's ability to implement CSCP is a student outcome.

The reviewers of the SCPIS were five experienced, district level school counseling directors familiar with the ASCA National Model (Clemens et al., 2010). The reviewers indicated which of the items on the SCPIS reflected important characteristics of the ASCA National Model program; they identified potential problems with wording and suggested alternative wording (Clemens et al., 2010). After the developers of the SCPIS revised wording based on the reviewer's feedback, it was confirmed to have construct validity.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of measurements when the testing procedures are repeated on a population of individuals or groups (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999; Gregory, 2011). Reliability is expressed in a coefficient from 0 to 1.0 with 0 having no relationship and 1.0 having a very good relationship; the acceptable cut-off reliability coefficient is approximately .80 (Gregory, 2011). To establish internal consistency reliability, the SCPIS was completed by sixty school counselors who were participating in a state school counseling association conference session on the ASCA National Model

(Clemens et al., 2010). Internal consistency reliability analyses were conducted and five items with low correlations were dropped, resulting in the final 20 items for the SCPIS; the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency reliability estimate for the remaining items was .81 (Clemens et al., 2010). Cronbach's alpha reliability estimates for subscales of the SCPIS are good and range from .79 to .87 (Clemens et al., 2010).

Data Analysis Plan

The statistical software program I utilized to analyze the data was the International Business Machines (IBM) Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is a software program used for quantitative data entry and analysis that generates data output, tables, and graphs for researcher interpretation (Green & Salkind, 2011). I analyzed the data for this study utilizing a t test for independent samples. As referenced in Chapter one, the assumptions underlying the t test for independent samples are: (1) observations in both samples must be independent, (2) the two populations from selected samples must be normally distributed, and (3) the samples must have equal variance (Green & Salkind, 2011). The t test for independent samples evaluated the difference between the means of the two groups (graduates from CACREP accredited school counseling programs and graduates from non-CACREP school counseling programs on the SCPIS (Green & Salkind, 2011). The Levene's test for equality of variance evaluated the assumption that the population variances for the two groups were equal. I determined the confidence interval to be 95% which meant the null hypothesis would be retained if the t statistic falls within the calculated 95% confidence interval; the

confidence interval contained the parameter values that when tested should not be rejected with the same sample.

I utilized the demographic information to ensure that participants graduated after 2003 as well as to determine their school's CACREP status at the time of graduation. All items on the SCPIS were analyzed to answer the research questions. An overall score answered research question one. The independent subscales were used as follows: I retrieved data from the programmatic orientation subscale (items 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, and 14) to answer research question two, the school counseling services subscale (items 2, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, and 20) to answer research question three, and the computerized data subscale (items 15, 16, 17) to answer research question four. For example, item 14 reads "An annual review is conducted to get information for improving next year's program" and item 20 reads "School counselors communicate with parents to coordinate student achievement and gain feedback for program improvement". In Chapter 4, I report the results, and a detailed interpretation is available in Chapter 5.

Restatement of Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions.

RQ1: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of effectively implementing CSCP as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS)?

RQ2: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of being professionally oriented to CSCP as measured by the programmatic orientation subscale of the SCPIS?

RQ3: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of providing school counseling services as measured by the school counseling services subscale of the SCPIS?

RQ4: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP as measured by the computerized data subscale of the SCPIS?

Hypotheses.

Null ($H_0$1): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding implementing comprehensive school counseling programs effectively as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$1): There is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding implementing comprehensive school counseling programs effectively as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Null ($H_0$2): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs

regarding being professionally oriented to CSCP as measured by the professional

orientation subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$2): There is a statistically significant difference in the

perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling

programs regarding being professionally oriented to CSCP as measured by the

professional orientation subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation

Survey.

Null ($H_0$3): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of

graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs

regarding providing school counseling services as measured by the school counseling

subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$3): There is a statistically significant difference in the

perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling

programs regarding providing school counseling services as measured by the school

counseling subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Null ($H_0$4): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of

graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs

regarding using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP as measured by the

computerized subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$4): There is a statistically significant difference in the

perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling

programs regarding using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP as measured by the computerized subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Threats to Validity

External Validity

External threats to validity occur when researchers erroneously make conclusions based on sample data (Creswell, 2009). Threats to external validity for this study included situational/contextual factors and Hawthorne effects. Situational/contextual factors may have occurred with this study due to drawing the sample of school counselors who participate in online social media or forums; therefore, limiting the generalizability of the results. I addressed this threat by restricting claims about all school counselors. Hawthorne effects may occur with this study due to the participants' potential to alter their behavior because they are aware of being observed; I addressed this threat in my summary of the results.

Internal Validity

Internal threats to validity occur when experimental procedures, treatments, or experiences of the study participants threaten the researcher's ability to correctly draw conclusions about the population from the study data (Creswell, 2009). Threats to internal validity for this study included maturation, regression, and mortality. Maturation may have occurred with this study if some of the participating school counselors attended a workshop or received any additional training on CSCP; I was limited in addressing this threat. Regression may occur with this study if I select study participants with extreme scores; I addressed this threat by ensuring there were no extreme scores. Mortality may

occur with this study if study participants do not complete the study; I addressed this threat by recruiting a large enough sample to account for any participants who did not complete the study.

Construct Validity

Threats to construct validity occur when researchers incorrectly conclude that their study measured what they intended to measure (Trochim, 2006). Threats to construct validity for this study included hypothesis guessing and experimenter expectancies. Hypothesis guessing may have occurred with this study if study participants guessed at the real purpose of the study and adjusted their responses on the survey to reflect their hunch; I am limited in addressing this threat. Experimenter expectancies may occur with this study if my communication with study participants revealed my desired outcome for the study; I addressed this threat by ensuring that my communication with the study participants was bias free. In addition, if the results show that CACREP is relevant to school counselors' perception of effectively implementing CSCP, these results might be due to other factors than attending a CACREP accredited program such as school counselors participating in post-graduate workshops or trainings; this would be noted in the summary of results.

<div align="center">

Ethical Procedures

</div>

I needed approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to recruiting participants and collecting data. The human participants for this study were volunteers who have provided consent utilizing the Consent Form for Adults provided by the Walden University Center for Research Quality. The informed consent

form acknowledged participants' rights and guaranteed confidentiality (Creswell, 2009). There were no ethical concerns related to the recruitment materials and processes. Using the potential risks and benefits section of Walden University's IRB application as a guide, I was confident in my low risk assessment for participation in this study. All items in the potential risks and benefits section of the IRB application were not applicable to this study (e.g., unintended disclosure of confidential information; psychological stress greater than what one would experience in daily life; attention to personal information that is irrelevant to the study; unwanted solicitation, intrusion, or observation in public places; social or economic loss; perceived coercion to participate due to any existing or expected relationship between the participant and the researcher; misunderstanding as a result of experimental deception; negative effects on participants' or stakeholders' health) (Walden University, 2015).

There were no ethical concerns related to data collection activities. Study participants' involvement in the study was voluntary. Study participants were able to choose to discontinue participation at any time. The data collected was anonymous and did not identify the participants. The research data was stored on my personal computer requiring a password for retrieval; the data will be deleted from my personal computer in five years from the time of data collection.

There were no ethical issues related to doing this study at my work environment or conflict of interest in any manner. I do not currently work as a school counselor; however, I maintain collegial relationships with school counselors in my area. While

school counselors I am acquainted with may have participated in this study, the anonymous data collection procedures ensured no ethical issues occurred.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I described the research methodology. I detailed the quantitative study where I described distributing the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey to professional school counselors and employing a t test in SPSS to evaluate the difference between the means of the two groups of school counselors (graduates from CACREP accredited school counseling programs and graduates from non-CACREP school counseling programs). The results should indicate if a difference exists between graduating from a CACREP accredited school counseling program and school counselors' perceived perception of implementing comprehensive school counseling programs. In Chapter 4, I accurately present the results that are aligned with the research questions, hypotheses, design, and analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Research confirms that when school counselors implement CSCP, the students they serve have measurable benefits including: statistically significant positive outcomes in academics, attendance, graduation rates, and overall student achievement (Burkard et al., 2012; Carey et al., 2012a; Carey et al., 2012b; Wilkerson et al., 2013). Many states have developed evaluation systems to assess school counselors' implementation of CSCP. After an exhaustive review of the literature, I found no literature examining school counselors' perception of their graduate training as relevant to their implementation of CSCP. The purpose of this quantitative study was to fill the gap and better understand the difference between the independent variable of graduation from a CACREP accredited school counseling programs and the dependent variable of school counselors' perception of effectively implementing CSCP as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS).

In order to examine whether a difference exists between CACREP standards and school counselor's preparedness to implement CSCP, I sought the answers to four research questions:

RQ1: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of effectively implementing CSCP as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS)?

RQ2: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of being professionally oriented to CSCP as measured by the programmatic orientation subscale of the SCPIS?

RQ3: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of providing school counseling services as measured by the school counseling services subscale of the SCPIS?

RQ4: What is the difference between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP as measured by the computerized data subscale of the SCPIS?

The corresponding hypotheses were:

Null ($H_0 1$): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding implementing comprehensive school counseling programs effectively as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1 1$): There is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding implementing comprehensive school counseling programs effectively as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Null ($H_0 2$): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs

regarding being professionally oriented to CSCP as measured by the professional

orientation subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$2): There is a statistically significant difference in the

perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling

programs regarding being professionally oriented to CSCP as measured by the

professional orientation subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation

Survey.

Null ($H_0$3): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of

graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs

regarding providing school counseling services as measured by the school counseling

subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$3): There is a statistically significant difference in the

perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling

programs regarding providing school counseling services as measured by the school

counseling subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Null ($H_0$4): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of

graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs

regarding using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP as measured by the

computerized subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$4): There is a statistically significant difference in the

perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling

programs regarding using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP as measured by the computerized subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

In Chapter 4, I review my data collection procedures, participant demographics, study results, and a summary of the outcomes.

Data Collection and Participant Demographics

I collected data during a four-week window beginning January 11, 2016 and ending February 2, 2016. The recruitment methods, as discussed in Chapter three, included posting to various professional social media forums and listservs as well as through direct email; specifically, ASCA SCENE on the ASCA website, the ASCA page on LinkedIn, and CESNET. Additionally, I sent an email request to each of the 50 presidents of each state's school counseling association and asked them to distribute my survey to their members through their regular form of communication.

There were no alterations to the data collection plan as presented in Chapter three. On January 11, 2016 at 5:30 p.m., I posted my recruitment letter to ASCA SCENE, the ASCA page on LinkedIn, and sent the recruitment letter via email to all 50 state presidents of school counseling associations. On January 13, 2016 at 9:30 a.m., I sent an email request to Dr. Marty Jencius, the listowner of CESNET-L, requesting his permission to post my recruitment letter to his listserv. After receiving permission from Dr. Jencius, I posted my recruitment letter to CESNET-L on January 14, 2016 at 9:15 a.m. On January 18, 2016 at 1:00 p.m., I posted my recruitment letter for the second time to ASCA SCENE. On January 25, 2016 at 8:15 a.m., I posted my recruitment letter for the second time to CESNET-L. On February 1, 2016 at 8:30 a.m., I posted my

recruitment letter for the third and final time to ASCA SCENE. On February 2, 2016 at

7:57 p.m., I had received in excess of the minimum number of participants and closed the

survey.

Following distribution, a total of 220 individuals viewed the survey. Five

individuals discontinued the survey after consenting to participate. Of the 215 remaining

participants, 48 individuals answered that they graduated from a masters in school

counseling program prior to 2003, making them ineligible to proceed with the study. Of

the 167 individuals eligible to proceed, 132 individuals finished and submitted the survey

for a total completion rate of 79.00%. Overall, the final sample population was 132, four

greater than the minimum of 128 participants needed, calculated using G*Power. See

Table 1 for descriptive data on participants' CACREP status of their school counseling

masters' degree program.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Masters Programs' CACREP Status

	n	%
CACREP graduates	98	74.24
Non-CACREP graduates	34	25.76
Total	132	100.00

The sample of respondents was not representative proportionally to the population

of CACREP and non-CACREP school counseling programs. There are 466 colleges and

universities in the United States that offer school counseling programs (ASCA, 2016).

There are 251 school counseling programs currently accredited by CACREP (CACREP,

2014). Therefore, 53.86% school counseling programs are CACREP accredited.

Although the exact number of graduates of school counseling programs is unknown, a more representative sample would have been closer to 53.86% of CACREP graduates and 46.14% of non-CACREP graduates.

Results

The focus of this dissertation was to examine if a statistically significant difference existed between perceptions of graduates from CACREP accredited school counseling programs and non-accredited school counseling program graduates with regard to effectively implementing a CSCP. I selected the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS) to analyze school counselors' perceptions of their implementation of CSCP. I analyzed all items on the SCPIS to answer research question one. I analyzed the questions from the programmatic orientation subscale (items 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, and 14) of the SCPIS to answer research question two. I analyzed the questions from the school counseling services subscale (items 2, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, and 20) of the SCPIS to answer research question three. I analyzed the questions from the computerized data subscale (items 15, 16, and 17) of the SCPIS to answer research question four. The response choices of the SCPIS are constructed on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *not met*), (2 = *development in progress*), (3 = *partially implemented*), and (4 = *fully implemented*).

The overall score on the SCPIS reflected that school counselors who graduated from CACREP accredited school counseling programs were on the higher end of *development in progress* as evidenced by a mean score of 2.84 (M = 2.84) regarding their perception of effectively implementing CSCP; school counselors who graduated from non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs were also on the higher end of

development in progress as evidenced by a mean score of 2.99 (M = 2.99) regarding their

perception of effectively implementing CSCP. I have indicated the results in Table 2.

Table 2

Mean Performance Scores for CACREP and Non-CACREP Graduates: Overall Score

	N	M	SD	SE*M*
CACREP graduates	98	2.84	.671	.064
Non-CACREP graduates	34	2.99	.615	.105

The score on the Programmatic Orientation subscale of the SCPIS reflected that

school counselors who graduated from CACREP accredited school counseling programs

were on the mid-range of *development in progress* as evidenced by a mean score of 2.58

(M = 2.58) regarding their perception of being professionally oriented to implementing

CSCP; school counselors who graduated from non-CACREP accredited school

counseling programs were on the higher end of *development in progress* as evidenced by

a mean score of 2.78 (M = 2.78) regarding their perception of being professionally

oriented to implementing CSCP. I have indicated the results in Table 3.

Table 3

Mean Performance Scores for CACREP and Non-CACREP Graduates: Programmatic Orientation Subscale

	N	M	SD	SE*M*
CACREP graduates	98	2.58	.782	.079
Non-CACREP graduates	34	2.78	.749	.128

The score on the School Counseling Services subscale of the SCPIS reflected that

school counselors who graduated from CACREP accredited school counseling programs

were on the higher end of *development in progress* as evidenced by a mean score of 2.85

(M = 2.85) regarding their perception of providing school counseling services; school

counselors who graduated from non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs were on the lower end of *partially implemented* as evidenced by a mean score of 3.02 (M = 3.02) regarding their perception of providing school counseling services. I have indicated the results in Table 4.

Table 4

Mean Performance Scores for CACREP and Non-CACREP Graduates: School Counseling Services Subscale

	N	M	SD	SE*M*
CACREP graduates	98	2.85	.704	.071
Non-CACREP graduates	34	3.02	.689	.118

The score on the Computerized Data subscale of the SCPIS reflected that school counselors who graduated from CACREP accredited school counseling programs were on the lower end of *partially implemented* as evidenced by a mean score of 3.16 (M = 3.16) regarding their perception of using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP; school counselors who graduated from non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs were on the lower mid-range of *partially implemented* as evidenced by a mean score of 3.39 (M = 3.39) regarding their perception of using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP. I have indicated the results in Table 5.

Table 5

Mean Performance Scores for CACREP and Non-CACREP Graduate: Computerized Data Subscale

	N	M	SD	SE*M*
CACREP graduates	98	3.16	.881	.089
Non-CACREP graduates	34	3.39	.653	.112

I utilized SPSS to calculate an independent-samples *t* test for research question one. The Levene's test evaluated the assumption that the population variances for the two groups were equal (.485). The *t* test showed there was no statistically significant difference between the mean for school counselors who graduated from CACREP and non-CACREP school counseling programs regarding their perception of implementing CSCP $t(130) = -1.24$, p=.21 ns, two-tailed. The confidence intervals were 95% [-.407, .092] which suggests 95% confidence that the population mean difference is between -.407 and .092. Based on the statistical data, I accepted the null hypothesis. I have reflected the results in Table 6.

Table 6

Independent Samples Test: Overall Score for Research Question 1

Levene's Test	*t*	df	Sig (2-tailed)	M dif	SE dif	95% CI
.485	-1.24	130	.21	-.157	.12	[-.407, .092]

I utilized SPSS to calculate an independent-samples *t* test for research question two. The Levene's test evaluated the assumption that the population variances for the two groups were equal (.658). The *t* test shows there was no statistically significant difference between the mean for school counselors who graduated from CACREP and non-CACREP school counseling programs regarding their perception of being professionally oriented to implementing CSCP $t(130) = -1.32$, p=.18 ns, two-tailed. The confidence intervals were 95% [-.509, .100] which suggests 95% confidence that the population is between -.509 and .100. Based on the statistical data, I accepted the null hypothesis. I have reflected the results in Table 7.

Table 7

Independent Samples Test: Programmatic Orientation Subscale for Research Question 2

Levene's Test	*t*	df	Sig (2-tailed)	M dif	SE dif	95% CI
.658	-1.32	130	.18	-.204	.15	[-.509, .100]

I utilized SPSS to calculate an independent-samples *t* test for research question three. The Levene's test evaluated the assumption that the population variances for the two groups were equal (.702). The *t* test shows there was no statistically significant difference between the mean for school counselors who graduated from CACREP and non-CACREP school counseling programs regarding their perception of providing school counseling services $t(130) = -1.25$, p=.21 ns, two-tailed. The confidence intervals were 95% [-.451, .100] which suggests 95% confidence that the population mean difference is between -.451 and .100. Based on the statistical data, I accepted the null hypothesis. I have reflected the results in Table 8.

Table 8

Independent Samples Test: School Counseling Services Subscale for Research Question 3

Levene's Test	*t*	df	Sig (2-tailed)	M dif	SE dif	95% CI
.702	-1.25	130	.21	-.175	.14	[-.451, .100]

I utilized SPSS to calculate an independent-samples *t* test for research question four. The Levene's test evaluated the assumption that the population variances for the two groups were equal (.004). The *t* test shows there was no statistically significant difference between the mean for school counselors who graduated from CACREP and

non-CACREP school counseling programs regarding their perception of using

computerized data to accentuate their CSCP $t(130) = -1.40$, p=.16 ns, two-tailed. The

confidence intervals were 95% [-.557, .095] which suggests 95% confidence that the

population mean difference is between -.451 and .100. Based on the statistical data, I

accepted the null hypothesis. I have reflected the results in Table 9.

Table 9

Independent Samples Test: Computerized Data Subscale for Research Question 4

Levene's Test	*t*	df	Sig (2-tailed)	M dif	SE dif	95% CI
.004	-1.40	130	.16	-.231	.16	[-.557, .095]

Summary

Research question one was designed to determine whether a statistically

significant difference existed between CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school

counseling programs regarding their perception of effectively implementing CSCP as

measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS).

According to the results of the analysis, there was no statistically significant difference in

the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling

programs regarding implementing CSCP as measured by the SCPIS.

Research question two was designed to determine whether a statistically

significant difference existed between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP

accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of being professionally

oriented to CSCP as measured by the programmatic orientation subscale of the SCPIS.

According to the results of the analysis, there was no statistically significant difference in

the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding being professionally oriented to CSCP as measured by the professional orientation subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Research question three was designed to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between graduates of CACREP and non-accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of providing school counseling services as measured by the school counseling services subscale of the SCPIS. According to the results of the analysis, there was no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding providing school counseling services as measured by the school counseling subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

Research question four was designed to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding their perception of using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP as measured by the computerized data subscale of the SCPIS. According to the results of the analysis, there was no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of graduates of CACREP and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding using computerized data to accentuate their CSCP as measured by the computerized subscale of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.

With regard to the validity of this study, though I obtained an adequate sample; the participating school counselors where those who participated in online social media or forums, as well as those holding membership in professional school counseling organizations; therefore, the results of this study may not be representative of the population of school counselors. Additionally, the Hawthorne effect may have occurred with this study due to the participants' potential to alter their behavior because they were aware of being observed. It is important to note that maturation may have occurred with this study if some of the participating school counselors attended a workshop or received any additional training beyond their masters training programs on CSCP; for example, participating school counselors may have attended workshops or conferences and received information about how to implement CSCP after their graduation from their school counseling program.

In Chapter 5, I will include additional interpretations of the study findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and social change implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to fill a gap in the professional school counseling literature and better understand whether differences exist between the perceptions of graduates from CACREP accredited school counseling programs and non-accredited school counseling programs regarding effective implementation of CSCP as measured by the SCPIS. An independent variable of graduation from a CACREP accredited school counseling program and a dependent variable of school counselors' perception of effectively implementing CSCP as measured by the SCPIS were utilized.

Key Findings

The findings of the study indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between graduation from a CACREP accredited school counseling program and graduation from a non-CACREP accredited school counseling program regarding school counselors' perceptions of implementing CSCP. The findings from the subscales of the SCPIS indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between graduation from CACREP accredited school counseling programs and graduation from non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs regarding school counselors perceptions of being professionally oriented to CSCP, providing school counseling services, and using computerized data to accentuate CSCP. The null hypotheses for all four research questions were accepted.

Interpretation of the Findings

The results of this study do not confirm that CACREP accredited school counseling programs better prepare school counselors to effectively implement CSCP compared to non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs. Many of the studies discussed in chapter two noted the importance of school counselors implementing CSCP; however, there was no literature which determined whether CACREP accredited programs better prepare school counselors to implement CSCP. Previously, Holcomb-McCoy et al. (2002) conducted a study to determine school counselors' perceptions of CACREP standards. Holcomb-McCoy et al. (2002) noted as a limitation that they did not obtain if participants graduated from a CACREP or non-CACREP school counseling program; therefore, I included asking participants if they graduated from a CACREP or non-CACREP school counseling program as part of my demographic data collection. Other researchers (Brown & Trusty, 2005; Young & Kaffenberger, 2011; Lapan, 2012) discussed the positive attributes of CSCP and implored school counselors to design and implement CSCP. None of the former studies ascertained school counselors' perceptions about their preparedness to implement a CSCP as a result of their graduate training program. I conducted this study to ascertain quantitative evidence regarding school counselors' perception of their graduate training as relevant to effectively implementing CSCP.

Many researchers discussed how counselor educators should transform their school counseling programs to be in line with CACREP standards (Diambra et al., 2011; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Brott, 2006; Branthoover et al., 2010). Recently, Diambra et al.

(2011) urged counselor educators to review and consider revamping their training

programs to be in line with CACREP standards so that students would graduate being

fully prepared to implement CSCP. Other researchers, Hayes and Paisley (2002),

explained how they restructured their graduate counseling program to be in accordance

with CSCP by using the CACREP school counseling standards to guide the program's

curriculum changes. Brott (2006) used CACREP standards and the ASCA National

Model to develop a framework to provide effective training of school counselors in an

effort to raise the accountability standards of professional school counselors. Finally,

Branthoover et al. (2010) discussed how a school counseling program that is CACREP

accredited exposed students to the application of a CSCP in real-world situations. None

of these studies compared school counselors who graduated from CACREP accredited

school counseling programs to school counselors who graduated from non-CACREP

school counseling programs. I conducted this study in order to determine if graduating

from a CACREP accredited school counseling program makes a difference in preparing

school counselors to effectively implement CSCP. While the results of the study do not

confirm that graduating from a CACREP accredited school counseling program makes a

difference in preparing school counselors to implement CSCP, there is compelling

evidence in the literature that school counselor preparation programs utilized CACREP

standards to assist their students to effectively perform the duties of school counselors.

As counselor educators are charged with the accountability of school counselors

obtaining the necessary skills for perform the functions of their profession, attention

should be given to how to best impart the necessary knowledge to school counselors in

training. Further, counselor educators should carefully review each aspect of their training programs and make the necessary changes to ensure their school counselors in training will be prepared to enter the profession of school counseling equipped to perform all facets of the profession, including implementing a CSCP. The CACREP standards offer school counseling training programs with the information to inform their decisions on the curriculum taught to trainees; regardless of the school counseling programs' CACREP status.

In this study, the guiding theoretical foundation was competency based education (CBE). The developers of the CACREP standards used the theory of CBE as the foundation for creating their standards; CACREP standards emphasize outcomes and provide counseling training programs with guidelines (standards) to organize, evaluate, and manage instruction. Further, the writers of the CACREP standards designed the standards to ensure students develop the necessary professional skills to practice effectively by adhering to professional standards (CACREP, 2015). A CACREP accredited school counseling program should emphasize student outcomes or competencies based on a system of organizing, evaluating, and managing instruction.

To further explain the connection between CBE and this study, I reviewed several studies supporting CBE. One study conducted by Thompson and Moffett (2008), found that school counselors are interested in learning about CSCP and concluded that school counselor preparation programs should provide competency-based course work designed to prepare school counselors to be educational leaders who can implement a data-driven CSCP. My findings do not support competency-based course work as relevant to school

counselors implementing CSCP; therefore, future research and review of school counseling curricula is needed to assist counselor educators with determining the best way to prepare school counselors to be effective professional school counselors.

Not all of the literature I reviewed supported CBE, and many researchers noted implementation challenges. Calhoun et al. (2011) noted that CBE has not completely evolved into an educational system that prepares students to apply their graduate training in the real world. Several researchers (Boahin & Hofman, 2012; Calhoun et al., 2011; Hassan, 2012) believed more time must be dedicated to the transmission of application knowledge from professor to student. The results of this study support the idea of additional time, strategies, and procedures for imparting competency-based education to school counselors in training attending CACREP accredited school counseling programs. Counselor educators should review their curricula and modify instruction to ensure school counseling graduate programs prepare trainees who are competent to perform the functions of a professional school counselor.

The average overall mean score on the SCPIS for school counselors who graduated from CACREP accredited school counseling programs was 2.84 (M = 2.84) and the overall mean score on the SCPIS for school counselors who graduated from non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs was 2.99 (M = 2.99); both of these scores fall in the high end of *development in progress* and do not represent school counselors who perceive themselves to effectively implement CSCP. I found these results to be concerning as neither group of school counselors perceived themselves to effectively implement CSCP. The ASCA National Model has been in existence since

2003 and this model offers an example of CSCP with detailed criteria and a framework

for implementation. Implementation challenges of the ASCA National Model included

school counselors changing outdated practices and learning new skills (Hatch & Chen-

Hayes, 2008). However, this study excluded school counselors who graduated from their

school counseling program prior to 2003; therefore, I believed certain implementation

challenges would not apply as these graduates should have been exposed to the most

current trends in school counseling during their graduate training. After conducting this

study, the questions I now have include why are school counselors not perceiving

themselves as effectively implementing CSCP? How can graduate training programs

better prepare school counselors to enter the profession competent to perform the

expected duties?

Limitations of the Study

The limitations discussed in chapter one included school counselors may be

capable of effective delivery of CSCP; however, without the support of school

administrators, the actual implementation of CSCP may not be evident. An additional

limitation was being unable to ensure that participants rated their responses accurately.

While I obtained an adequate sample size to dilute this limitation (n = 132), the

percentage of participating school counselors who graduated from CACREP accredited

school counseling programs (74.24%) was much higher than the actual number of school

counseling CACREP accredited programs (53.86%). Therefore, the results were skewed

as the population of school counselors was not representative of the population. My

findings may have been different if more school counselors who graduated from non-

CACREP accredited programs had participated; with 25.76 of the sample being non-CACREP graduates, it is not clear if these participants accurately reflected the perceptions of all non-CACREP school counseling graduates.

Recommendations

Researchers who conduct similar research in the future may benefit from ensuring a more equal sample size of the two groups. A qualitative component may shed light on some of the unanswered questions such as administrator support for implementing CSCP. Although there are 46.14% non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs, future researchers may want to sample them to see if they are adhering to CACREP standards and imploring the value of their graduates implementing CSCP as practicing school counselors.

Based on the results of this study, practicing school counselors do not perceive themselves as implementing CSCP. I recommend counselor educators in school counseling preparation programs thoroughly review their curricula to ensure their programs are preparing school counselors in training to effectively perform the duties of a school counselor. I further recommend that school counseling preparation programs market their programs to aspiring school counselors by demonstrating that their program will prepare aspiring school counselors to enter the profession of school counseling with the necessary skills to perform the functions of a professional school counselor. I personally believe that the CACREP standards provide the necessary framework for a school counseling program to design a curriculum to adequately prepare professional school counselors. Now that the CACREP standards will include an increase in the

minimum credit hours, I recommend that the decision makers of school counselor preparation programs that will need to increase their programs from 48 semester credit hours to 60 semester credit hours; or 72 quarter credit hours to 90 quarter credit hours use this time to ensure the additional credit offerings are designed to better train school counselors prior to the effective date of July 1, 2020.

Implications

Based on the absence of literature determining if CACREP standards better prepare school counselors to implement CSCP, this study adds to the school counseling literature. Previous research lends support to the benefits of school counselors adopting comprehensive school counseling programs as well as the relevance of CACREP standards providing counselor educators with the foundation to prepare curricula to train school counselors. Based on the sample participants' scores on the SCPIS, school counselors are not effectively implementing CSCP regardless of their masters programs' CACREP accreditation status. Therefore, positive social change implications of this study include highlighting the professional responsibility of counselor educators who are charged with ensuring graduates of school counseling training programs are prepared to enter the profession of school counseling equipped to effectively perform the minimum standards of the profession such as implementing a CSCP.

With the 2016 CACREP credit hour increase, university administrators will need to review several factors regarding pursuing or maintaining CACREP status to determine if they will comply with the increase from the 48 semester hour/72 quarter hour requirement to the new 60 semester hour/90 quarter hour requirement. If decision makers

at universities believe that CACREP accreditation is relevant to the preparation of school counselors, they may need to make changes beyond increasing the credit hour requirement. Each course offered in a school counseling program should be measured qualitatively and quantitatively to ensure that it not only meets CACREP standards, but provides school counselors in training with the necessary skills to perform their professional duties. Researchers will need to conduct more studies demonstrating the benefits of CACREP accreditation to assist aspiring school counselors with the decision to attend a CACREP or non-CACREP school counseling program; particularly if a non-accredited program has a 48/72 credit hour requirement compared to a CACREP accredited 60/90 credit hour requirement. When school counseling programs market their programs, the benefits of CACREP accreditation should be conveyed to potential students to assist them with making their academic decision. However, regardless of a school counseling programs' CACREP status, aspiring school counselors should receive the knowledge and training to effectively implement a comprehensive school counseling program.

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Appendix A: Letter Requesting Permission to use the Survey Instrument

404 Cornwallis Road
Turkey, NC 28393

October 25, 2014

Mr. David Elsner
Dr. John C. Carey
Developers of the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey

Dear Sirs,

I am a doctoral student in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at Walden University. My dissertation topic is *CACREP's Relevance to Effective Implementation of Comprehensive School Counseling Programs* and chaired by Dr. Shelley Jackson. I am writing for permission to use the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey in conducting my research.

I thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,
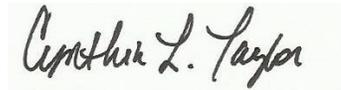
Cynthia L. Taylor, MA, NCC, NCSC
cynthia.taylor6@waldenu.edu
(910) 226-4089

Appendix B: Permission to use the Survey Instrument

John Carey <careyandassoc@comcast.net>   **10/26/14**

| to |
| me |

Dear Cynthia, You have permission to use the SCPIS in your research. Thanks for asking. John Carey

---

David Elsner <delsner@foxboroughrcs.org>   **10/26/14**

| to | me |, |
| careyandassoc |

Hello Cynthia – I have no objection, though my last involvement was nearly 10 years ago when I originally created the survey. There may have been some modifications since then. Jay Carey would have the latest information.

I would appreciate a mention somewhere if you find the survey useful. Good luck on your research.

Dave Elsner
Guidance/School Counselor Coordinator
Foxborough Regional Charter School
131 Central St. Foxborough MA 02035
P: 508-543-2508 x272
F: 508-698-7298

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

Dear Professional School Counselor:

This communication is to request your participation in a dissertation research project titled **CACREP's Relevance to Effective Implementation of Comprehensive School Counseling Programs.** This study is being conducted by me, Cynthia L. Taylor, a doctoral student in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at Walden University. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

Professional school counselors with a master's degree in school counseling who graduated from their school counseling program in 2003 or later and are currently employed as school counselors are the intended sample.

The purpose of this study is to utilize the School Counseling Implementation Survey to gather information regarding school counselors' perceptions of implementing comprehensive school counseling programs. In this study, the population will be limited to examining the perceptions of school counselors as a sample. The data collected will be used to examine school counselors' perceptions of implementing comprehensive school counseling programs. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Review this form in its entirety
- Click on the survey link and consent to participate
- Answer 2 demographic questions:
  - Did you graduate from your masters in school counseling program in 2003 or later?
  - Was your school counseling program CACREP accredited at the time of your graduation?
- Complete a one-time 20 item questionnaire that will take approximately 10 minutes
- Submit the completed questionnaire

Below are two sample questions of interest, with responses based on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not present) to 4 (fully implemented):

- School counselors use student performance data to decide how to meet student needs.
- An annual review is conducted to get information for improving next year's programs

Participation in this study is voluntary; there is no consequence for discontinuing from the study at any time, the alternative would be not to participate. If you choose to forego participation or discontinue at any time, your decision will be respected. The risks associated with this study are determined to be minimal and may include minor discomfort that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress, or becoming emotional about the topic. The data collected will be anonymous, therefore no identifying link to questionnaires will be established. There is no compensation associated with this study. The data collected may potentially help expand the literature base on the professional accountability of school counselors and counselor educators.
In order to participate in the study, you may click the link below. Each question must be answered in order to progress forward within the questionnaire; if there are questions that you do not want to answer, you may discontinue at any time. If you are not directed to the link immediately, you may also cut and paste the link into a web browser. Consent is indicated through participation, completion, and submission of the questionnaire.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ImplementingCSCP

Walden University's approval number for this study is 12-18-15-0275499 and it expires on December 17, 2016. I have no known conflicts of interest to disclose at this time. Please print or save this consent form for your records. For more information please contact the principal investigator, Cynthia L. Taylor (cynthia.taylor6@waldenu.edu), or my dissertation chair, Dr. Shelley Jackson (shelley.jackson@waldenu.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact a Walden University representative at (irb@waldenu.edu).

Thank you in advance for your participation,

Cynthia L. Taylor, MA, LPCA, NCC, NCSC
cynthia.taylor6@waldenu.edu
Counselor Education and Supervision Doctoral Student
Walden University

Appendix D: School Counseling Program Implementation Survey

Please rate each statement below in terms of the degree to which it is currently implemented in your School's School Counseling program. Circle your response using the following Rating Scale:

1 = Not Present;   2 = Development in Progress;   3 = Partly Implemented;   4= Fully Implemented

1. A written mission statement exists and is used as a foundation by all counselors.	1 2 3 4
2. Services are organized so that all students are well served and have access to them.	1 2 3 4
3. The program operates from a plan for closing the achievement gap for minority and lower income students.	1 2 3 4
4. The program has a set of clear measurable student learning objectives and goals are established for academics, social/personal skills, and career development.	1 2 3 4
5. Needs Assessment's are completed regularly and guide program planning.	1 2 3 4
6. All students receive classroom guidance lessons designed to promote academic, social/personal, and career development.	1 2 3 4
7. The program ensures that all students have academic plans that include testing, individual advisement, long-term planning, and placement.	1 2 3 4
8. The program has an effective referral and follow-up system for handling student crises.	1 2 3 4
9. School counselors use student performance data to decide how to meet student needs.	1 2 3 4
10. School counselors analyze student data by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic level to identify interventions to close achievement gaps.	1 2 3 4
11. School counselor job descriptions match actual duties.	1 2 3 4
12. School counselors spend at least 80% of their time in activities that directly benefit students.	1 2 3 4
13. The school counseling program includes interventions designed to improve the school's ability to educate all students to high standards.	1 2 3 4
14. An annual review is conducted to get information for improving next year's programs.	1 2 3 4
15. School counselors use computer software to access student data	1 2 3 4
16. School counselors use computer software to analyze student data	1 2 3 4
17. School counselors use computer software to use data for school improvement	1 2 3 4
18. The school counseling program has the resources to allow counselors to complete appropriate professional development activities.	1 2 3 4
19. School counseling priorities are represented on curriculum and education committees.	1 2 3 4
20. School counselors communicate with parents to coordinate student achievement and gain feedback for program improvement.	1 2 3 4