Counselor Educators and Students With Problems of Professional Competence: A Survey and Discussion

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A total of 370 counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs were surveyed to determine their knowledge of master's students' problems of professional competence (PPC) and their perception of roadblocks that affect gatekeeping practices. Findings suggest that educators are aware of students' PPC and that problematic students are impacting the overall learning environment, other students and counselor educators' personal stress. Participants reported roadblocks related to struggling emotionally to balance being empathetic with their gatekeeping duties and fears they would appear culturally insensitive.

Keywords: **counselor educators, CACREP, students, professional competence, gatekeeping**

It has been found that 10% of counselors-in-training are ill-suited for the profession (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002). In that, they have problems of professional competence (PPC) that impede their ability to function as professional counselors (Elman & Forrest, 2007). These PPC include skill competencies, ethical behaviors and appropriate personal functioning (Kaslow et al., 2007). To evaluate students in terms of professional competence and prevent those with inadequate skills and dispositions from entering the profession, gatekeeping is utilized. Counselor educators are required to be transparent in their gatekeeping procedures with students. Students are to be informed of "the levels of competency expected, appraisal methods, and timing of evaluations for both didactic and clinical competencies" and be provided "ongoing feedback" (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014, p. 15). There has been significant research to provide counselor educators with information to establish gatekeeping and remediation procedures (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Homrich, DeLorenzi, Bloom, & Godbee, 2014; Hutchens, Block, & Young, 2013; Kerl, Garcia, McCullough, & Maxwell, 2002; McAdams, Foster, & Ward, 2007; Pease-Carter & Barrio Minton, 2012; Vacha-Haase, Davenport, & Kerewsky, 2004; Zoimek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010). However, little research has been done to examine the impact on counselor educators when interacting with students who have PPC and the roadblocks that impede educators' ability to gatekeep.

Gatekeeping Procedures

Gatekeeping is a mechanism for counselor educators to determine the fitness of students to enter the counseling profession (Vacha-Haase et al., 2004). Gatekeeping begins as part of the admission process of a counseling program (Kerl & Eichler, 2007). During the admission process, counselor educators do not allow entry to prospective students who show traits, qualities or behaviors that would result in them not being able to meet professional competencies or who lack the prescribed academic requirements (Lumadue & Duffey, 1999; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2013). However, gatekeeping is not just part of the admission process. Ziomek-Daigle and Christensen (2010) found that gatekeeping is a progressive activity that includes four phases, including preadmission screening, postadmission screening, remediation plan and remediation outcome.

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Informing Students of Program Expectations

The American Counseling Association *Code of Ethics* (2014) provides that counseling students be aware of what type and degree of skill and knowledge will be required of them to be successful in the program, specific training goals and objectives, what students' evaluations are based on, and the policies and procedures for students' evaluations. One of the most important methods of ensuring understanding of expectations is informing students of the program's expectations at the beginning of the program. Once clearly defined behaviors are established, sharing these expectations with students can result in fewer problematic situations (Kerl et al., 2002; McAdams et al., 2007). Furthermore, not providing students with clear expectations for conduct may be viewed as unfair to those wanting to become counselors (Homrich et al., 2014).

It is recommended that professional standards be made clear to students and applied consistently (Hutchens et al., 2013). Using multiple methods of distributing information is desired by students who have stated they want information shared both orally and in written form, and want the information presented throughout the program (Pease-Carter & Barrio Minton, 2012). Pease-Carter and Barrio Minton (2012) found that students desired information not only about academic expectations but also wanted to know about self-disclosure, reflection, personal growth and student rights.

Assessing Students' PPC Behaviors

Individual programs have developed standards for evaluating students on professional competencies and use these evaluations to provide formative feedback (Kerl et al., 2002). Historically, the most commonly cited problematic behaviors have been inadequate clinical skills, defensiveness in supervision and deficient interpersonal skills (Vacha-Haase et al., 2004). Efforts to identify criteria for evaluating students in terms of professional behaviors, interpersonal behaviors and intrapersonal behaviors have recently been undertaken (Homrich et al., 2014), and these criteria provide a platform for developing clear expectations for counseling trainees.

Roadblocks to Gatekeeping

There are a variety of reasons that counselor educators do not engage in the gatekeeping process. *Gateslipping* rates have been reported as higher in programs where faculty members reported that their colleagues were concerned about being sued or receiving less than favorable teaching evaluations (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Jacobs et al., 2011). In some settings, colleagues and administration provide support for engaging in gatekeeping; however, lack of clear evidence and bias toward leniency lead to gateslippage (Brear & Dorrian, 2010). Absence of well-defined program policies may make it difficult to initiate gatekeeping conversations with a student as well (Jacobs et al., 2011).

Gatekeeping demands a great amount of time and energy, and situations involving PPC often seem unending (Gizara & Forrest, 2004). Not only do PPC have to be identified and communicated to the student, remediation plans need to be developed. Such plans may include helping the counselor-in-training obtain remedial assistance, providing intensified supervision, documenting the activities of the plan and ensuring the student understands due process options (Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010). When remediation plans are not successful, decisions about dismissal must be made, and the actions taken must be transparent (Kaslow et al., 2007).

There may be occasions where the gatekeeping responsibility is diffused among different entities.

In a review of ethical issues around professional competence problems (Johnson et al., 2008), Johnson labeled this issue as the "hot potato game" (p. 589), where the last entity engaged with the problematic student is *stuck* with the issue. If a student is allowed to gateslip through the graduate program, then the training facility and licensing board now become involved. Rather than address the issue when it is first recognized, the student may be allowed to move to the next stage of training with the hope that the problem disappears or that that it is addressed at the next level. Addressing issues early in the training may help avoid more serious issues, like the *empathy veil*, later when students go to clinical sites.

The Empathy Veil

This term was coined by Brown-Rice and Furr (2014) and refers to the counselor educator's need to empathize with the counselor-in-training, which can result in reluctance to engage in gatekeeping activities. Role tension may be one factor in developing an empathy veil. This term evolved from work by Sue and Sue (2012) where a person's worldview is seen as having an *invisible veil* that is created by cultural conditioning and is believed to operate outside of consciousness. Forrest et al. (2013) found that empathy may contribute to avoiding confronting student issues for fear of damaging the relationship. Because of the role that faculty play in fostering growth and development, which often involves compassion and support, it may become difficult to provide accurate summative evaluations of trainees' behaviors (Johnson et al., 2008). Given that many faculty members also are professional counselors, they may view their role as assisting the student in behavior change and thus work with the student to address interpersonal issues that interfere with developing counseling skills (Kerl et al., 2002). This empathy can be both a support and a challenge when difficult conversations about problematic professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal behaviors need to take place (Jacobs et al., 2011). Although empathy can create a safe environment in which to discuss difficulties, an educator's empathy also can lead to overprotective behaviors that may actually interfere with the student's development (Gizara & Forrest, 2004).

Role of Diversity

Another important area of consideration is how cultural differences intersect with PPC. When there is a cross-cultural student PPC situation, a complex power differential arises that not only is associated with the faculty–student relationship, but also related to cultural differences (Goodrich & Shin, 2013). Kaslow et al. (2007) proposed that consideration should be given to the impact of beliefs, values and attitudes when assessing competence problems. Fear of appearing biased may complicate identifying trainees with PPC and how decisions are made regarding students (Shen-Miller, Forrest, & Elman, 2009). The counselor educator's own cultural background may influence how counselors-in-training are evaluated, and it is recommended that cultural dynamics be assessed when addressing PPC (Rust, Raskin, & Hill, 2013). Shen-Miller, Forrest, and Burt (2012) identified two approaches that often are used by faculty in assessing students—culture-attentive (i.e., approaches that include attention to aspects of diversity) or colorblind (i.e., inattention or minimization of differences associated with diversity). These views represent two ends of a "continuum of conceptualizing intersections between diversity and professional standards" (Shen-Miller et al., 2012, p. 1207). In trying to find a place on this continuum to address PPC, do counselor educators underidentify PPC because of fear of being biased? Or, are counselor educators more prone to overidentify PPC because of not examining contextual factors that influence competence? In this study, an attempt is made to examine counselor educators' views of what interferes with their ability to address issues of counselor education student PPC.

Other Barriers

Previous research has found that educators believe that they have not been provided with sufficient

training related to gatekeeping and remediation procedures, and they do not feel supported by their agency and colleagues (Gizara & Forrest, 2004; Vacha-Haase et al., 2004). Additionally, counselor educators may be reluctant to dismiss a student for dread of potential litigation and personal recrimination (Crawford & Gilroy, 2012; Hutchens et al., 2013) and receiving poor teaching evaluations (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002). Recent court cases have increased awareness about the legal consequences of gatekeeping. The Ward and Keeton cases have highlighted the need for counseling programs to establish clear statements about student expectations (Herlihy, Hermann, & Greden, 2014). Other cases have taught faculty members the importance of providing regular process evaluations and thorough documentation (McAdams & Foster, 2007). Reflection on the results of facing a court challenge includes the significance of having a measure of performance that helps faculty retain objectivity and the importance of adhering to established procedures (McAdams et al., 2007).

The purpose of this study was to answer the following research questions: (a) What types of master's students' PPC do Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) counselor educators perceive have the greatest impact on them as educators? (b) What do CACREP counselor educators perceive are roadblocks that interfere with their ability to engage in the gatekeeping of master's students with PPC? and (c) What is CACREP counselor educators' knowledge of their programs' protocol for addressing a student with PPC? In this study, *student* refers to a master's student enrolled in the participant's counseling program, *colleague* is another counselor educator teaching in the participant's counseling program, and *impact* means to have a strong effect. *PPC* refers to attitudes and behaviors that could interfere with the professional competence of a counselor-in-training, including: (a) a lack of ability or opposition to acquire and integrate professional standards into one's professional counseling behavior; (b) a lack of ability to attain professional skills and reach an acceptable level of competency; (c) a lack of ability to manage one's stress, psychological dysfunction or emotional responses that may impact professional performance; or (d) engagement in unethical behavior (Falender, Collins, & Shafranske, 2009).

Methods

Participants and Procedures

Prior to initiating the study, institutional review board approval was obtained. Recruitment of participants was conducted by an e-mail to all faculty employed at CACREP-accredited programs in the United States. The researchers of this study obtained a list of accredited programs from the official CACREP Web site and then visited each program's Web site to obtain the e-mail addresses of the program's counselor educators. Seven programs did not list faculty e-mails on their university Web sites. The exact number of educators teaching in CACREP-accredited programs is not known, as the programs' Web sites might have imprecise or out-of-date information. Based upon the e-mail addresses gathered from the university Web sites, a list of 1,584 faculty members was created. Thereafter, one e-mail solicitation was sent to all identified faculty that directed participants to an online survey entitled, Problems of Professional Competency Survey – Counselor Educator Version (PPCS-CE), which was located on Psychdata.com. Of the 1,584 e-mails that were sent, 71 were undeliverable due to lacking a valid address or security issues, 15 were returned with automatic responses that the faculty member was absent (e.g., on sabbatical, no longer at university, ill, professor emeritus), and five responses indicated that the receiver of the e-mail was not a counselor educator. This left a total sample size of 1,493 CACREP counselor educators. For a population of 1,500, a sample size of 306 is adequate to generalize with a confidence interval of 95% (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). A total of 382 participants completed the survey; however, respondents with missing or invalid data ($n = 12$, less than 4%) were eliminated via listwise deletion, leaving a total number of

370 participants included in this study. This resulted in an adequate sample size of 370 participants and a final response rate of 25%. Frequencies and percentages of the demographic variables in this study are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Numbers and Percentages of Demographic Variables

Variable	Number	Percentage
Gender:		
Female	213	58
Male	157	42
Background:		
Caucasian	310	84
African American	24	6
Hispanic/Latino	12	3
Multi-Racial	15	4
Asian/Pacific Islander	8	2
Native American	1	1
Age:		
20 years to 29 years	7	2
30 years to 39 years	77	21
40 years to 49 years	97	26
50 years to 59 years	76	21
60 years or older	113	31
Sexual Orientation:		
Heterosexual	331	90
Bisexual	9	2
Gay or Lesbian	30	8
Description of Program:		
Predominantly on Campus	318	86
Predominantly Online	7	2
Hybrid of Online/on Campus	45	12
Location of Program:		
South	146	40
Northeast	93	25
Midwest	74	20
West	57	15

Highest Degree:		
PhD – CACREP Program	201	54
PhD – Non-CACREP Program	38	10
EdS in Counseling	10	3
PhD – Counseling Psychology	31	8
PhD – Clinical Psychology	4	1
Other (doctoral in another discipline or master's in counseling or related field)	86	23
Academic Rank:		
Assistant Professor	145	39
Associate Professor	102	28
Professor	92	25
Clinical Instructor	8	2
Adjunct Instructor	6	.2
Other	17	5
Years Teaching in a CACREP-Accredited Program:		
Less than 2 years	59	16
2 to 5 years	84	23
6 to 10 years	90	24
11 to 15 years	66	18
16 to 20 years	28	8
Over 20 years	43	12
Licenses and Certifications Held:		
Licensed Professional Counselor	201	55
Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor	21	6
Provisionally Licensed Professional Counselor	14	4
Licensed Marriage & Family Counselor	33	9
Licensed Psychologist	37	10
Licensed Social Worker	7	2
Certified School Counselor	95	26
National Certified Counselor	199	54

Instrument

The survey for this present study was designed based upon the Problems of Professional Competency Survey – Master Student Version (PPCS-MS) developed by Brown-Rice and Furr (2013), related to determining master's students' enrolled in CACREP-accredited programs knowledge of classmates with PPC. The PPCS-MS was constructed based upon the literature regarding PPC in psychology, counseling and social work. To establish content validity and reliability, the PPCS-MS underwent an expert review process and two pilot studies to provide clarity and conciseness of the survey questions. Additionally, a principal components analysis created components representative of what the review of the literature provided on these issues (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013). The questions and format of the PPCS-MS were used and adjusted to create a self-report survey entitled

the Problems of Professional Competency Survey – Counselor Educator Version (PPCS-CE). This instrument was divided into three parts: Part I - Demographic Information, Part II - Counselor Educators and Students with PPC, and Part III - Counselor Educators' Knowledge of Colleagues' PPC (removed from this analysis). Part II included three sections. Section I, Counselor Educators' Knowledge of Students' Problems of Professional Competency, included one question to determine whether participants have observed students with PPC and two questions to determine participants' knowledge of the type of students' PPC and the impact of the problematic behavior. Each PPC was rank ordered from 1 being the most common and 9 being the least common observed behavior, and the impact of having a student with PPC was ranked ordered with 1 having the most impact and 9 having the least impact. Chi square analyses of each of the rank ordered items led to a rejection of the null hypotheses of the categories of the item occurring with equal probabilities.

Section II of Part II of the survey investigated counselor educators' reactions to students' PPC and consisted of seven questions. The answers to all these questions were based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Section III, Counselor Educators' Knowledge of Counseling Program's Protocol for Addressing Problems of Professional Competency, included questions relating to responsibility for being aware of students PPC and programs' protocols for addressing PPC. The first nine questions were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale. The tenth item was unstructured to provide a place for participants to provide additional information.

Results

Types and Impact of Students' Problematic Behavior
Of the 370 participants, the majority (91%, *n* = 338) reported that they had observed students with PPC in their programs. Additionally, 2% (*n* = 8) of the respondents indicated they did not know if there were students with PPC in their programs, leaving 7% (*n* = 24) who had not observed any students with PPC. To answer the first research question regarding the types and impact of master's students' PPC observed by CACREP counselor educators, the responses for the 338 participants who reported observing a student with PPC were examined according to the rank order question regarding the types of PPC that participants most observed with counselors-in-training in their programs. The most frequently identified problematic behaviors included *inadequate clinical skills* (*M* = 2.90, *SD* = 1.88), *inadequate interpersonal skills* (*M* = 3.15, *SD* = 1.69), *inadequate academic skills* (*M* = 3.38, *SD* = 2.29), *inability to regulate emotions* (*M* = 4.16, *SD* = 1.88), and *unprofessional behavior* (*M* = 4.29, *SD* = 2.13). Those behaviors ranked as less impactful were *unprofessional behavior* (*M* = 4.29, *SD* = 2.13), *unethical behavior* (*M* = 5.63, *SD* = 2.03), *psychological concern* (*M* = 6.20, *SD* = 1.84), *personality disorder* (*M* = 7.60, *SD* = 1.61), and *substance use disorder* (*M* = 7.69, *SD* = 1.68).

The responses for the rank order question regarding the type of impact of having counselors-in-training in their program with PPC focused on the behaviors having the most impact on the faculty member. Included in this list were *disrupted the classroom learning environment* (*M* = 2.99, *SD* = 1.86), *negatively affected other students* (*M* = 3.26, *SD* = 1.52), *increased participant's workload* (*M* = 3.29, *SD* = 2.05), and *increased participant's stress* (*M* = 3.39, *SD* = 1.64). Additional items that were ranked as less impactful included *negatively affected client care* (*M* = 5.06, *SD* = 2.44), *negatively affected relationship with students* (*M* = 5.47, *SD* = .87), *negatively affected relationship with colleagues* (*M* = 6.59, *SD* = 1.42), *negatively affected reputation of the program* (*M* = 6.81, *SD* = 1.90), and *a grievance or litigation occurred* (*M* = 8.25, *SD* = 1.94).

Roadblocks to Gatekeeping

All participants (*n* = 370) completed Section II, Part II of the PPCS-CE, and these participants' responses for *strongly agree* and *agree* were combined to report the subsequent findings. Each of the participants reported degree of agreement or disagreement regarding beliefs around the roadblocks that interfere with their ability to engage in the gatekeeping of master's students with PPC. Fifty-three percent (*n* = 197) reporting struggling emotionally to balance being empathetic with a student demonstrating PPC and their gatekeeping duties. When looking at addressing PPC with a student who is culturally different from the participant, 38% (*n* = 141) stated they were reluctant to do so due to the fear they would appear culturally insensitive, and 36% (*n* = 137) were reluctant to do so due to the fear of allegations of discrimination. Regarding being supported by others, 13% (*n* = 47) provided they did not feel supported by their chair to address a student who demonstrated PPC, and 13% (*n* = 47) stated they did not feel supported by their colleagues to address a student who demonstrated PPC. Further, 92% (*n* = 339) were concerned about the counseling profession when a student with PPC was allowed to pass through the program. Additionally, 30% (*n* = 110) provided they were reluctant to address a student demonstrating PPC for fear of recrimination (e.g., negative teaching evaluations, legal action).

Protocol for Addressing Students with PPC

When the participants' responses for *strongly agree* and *agree* were combined, 99% (*n* = 368) believed it was their responsibility to be aware of students with PPC, 91% (*n* = 335) believed that it was their chair's responsibility, and 96% (*n* = 354) believed it was both their chair and respondents' responsibility to be aware of students with PPC. Additionally, 94% (*n* = 347) were aware of their programs' procedures regarding how to address problematic behavior, 71% (*n* = 263) reported their chair had discussed their programs' procedures regarding addressing PPC with them, and 38% (*n* = 140) stated they had received training from their program regarding how to intervene with a student who they believe is demonstrating PPC. Further, 87% (*n* = 321) were aware of the appropriate intervention to take with students with PPC, 51% (*n* = 189) would like more information regarding how to identify students with PPC, and 61% (*n* = 226) of the participants would like more information on how to respond to a student with PPC.

Discussion and Implications

The PPC identified in this study as being observed most frequently are consistent with those problematic behaviors identified in other studies. Vacha-Haase et al. (2004) also identified that inadequate clinical skills and deficient interpersonal skills were most commonly cited as problematic behaviors. In a study examining a proposed set of standards for clinical training, Homrich et al. (2014) identified three categories of behaviors needed by graduate students in clinical training, which included professional behaviors, interpersonal behaviors and intrapersonal behaviors. The types of PPC counselor educators observed in this study parallel the findings of Homrich et al. (2014) in that *inadequate clinical skills* and *unprofessional behavior* are similar to their theme of professional behaviors, and the category of *inadequate interpersonal skills* is comparable to their theme of interpersonal behaviors. *Inability to regulate emotions* is analogous to their theme of intrapersonal behaviors. Because they were examining clinical training standards, there was no mention of academic skills, yet this type of PPC was cited as a concern by many of the respondents in this study.

Examination of these data leads to questions about how counseling programs admit students. Both academic skills and interpersonal skills are areas that can be addressed through the admissions process. Smaby, Maddox, Richmond, Lepkowski, and Packman (2005) found that undergraduate

GPA and GRE Verbal scores could be predictive of scores on the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE), which focus on knowledge, but were not highly predictive of personal development. Given the level of concern over academic skills, using these cognitive measures is important, but expanding the way of assessing academic ability also needs to be sensitive to issues around diversity and bias in standardized measures.

In a survey on admission screening measures, training directors indicated that the personal interview was the most effective screening measure (Leverett-Main, 2004). Using creative group strategies during the admission process has been advocated to help assess academic potential as well as dispositions (Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2013). Smith, Robinson, and Young (2007) found that an assessment of wellness might uncover issues around psychological distress that could affect performance in a counseling graduate education program.

Previous research has indicated that faculty members have concerns about addressing PPC because of their desire to be supportive of students (Johnson et al., 2008; Kerl et al., 2002), which would support the concept of the empathy veil (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2014). In this study, 53% of respondents reported struggling emotionally to balance empathy with their gatekeeping duties to intercede with a counselor-in-training with PPC. When the open-ended responses were reviewed, participants' responses supported this empathetic struggle. For example, one respondent stated, "I have heard many times how a grade should be considered through compassion for student circumstances rather than demonstrated competency." Another participant provided, "Our empathy wants to give them another chance, but our ethics don't necessarily allow for it. It's a struggle for me. It is not a part of the job that I anticipated. Although I remember learning the concept in my doctoral program, I wasn't prepared to address it." Therefore, it would appear that these counselor educators are struggling with empathy veils.

When looking at other roadblocks (e.g., lack of peer and institutional support, diversity in gatekeeping, threat of litigation or recrimination from a counselor-in-training), there were some interesting findings. Previous research has found a lack of support for counselor educators from administration and colleagues in dealing with problematic students (Gizara & Forrest, 2004; Vacha-Haase et al., 2004). This concern has been found to be especially true for field supervisors (Bogo, Regehr, Power, & Regehr, 2007; Homonoff, 2008). However, the results of the current study found that only 13% stated they did not feel supported by their chair or colleagues to address a student who demonstrated PPC. The open-ended responses supported these findings. For example, participants stated, "We have a culture and climate of supporting our gatekeeping role in the counseling profession"; "My colleagues and I work as a team in addressing student concerns"; and "I feel supported by my chair and department when dealing with such issues. We deal with these issues as a department. No one is alone in addressing such issues." Therefore, for this study, lack of institutional and peer support do not seem to be roadblocks. This could be due to the fact that all the participants in this study worked at programs that were accredited by CACREP. CACREP (2016) requires a procedure for addressing student professional and personal development. Counselor educators at programs that are not CACREP-accredited may report different findings. A limitation of this study is that only faculty from CACREP-accredited programs were contacted. Future research focusing on non-CACREP programs and site supervisors regarding this issue may be beneficial. Those working in the field may not have a deep understanding of the role of gatekeeping and may need to develop clear guidelines for their role as supervisors for both counselors-in-training and for counselors seeking licensure.

When the counselor-in-training was from a different cultural background than the counselor

educator, 38% of the respondents expressed concern about appearing culturally insensitive, and 36% were concerned about allegations of discrimination. Because this survey was a self-report measure, there is risk that some participants provided answers they considered to be socially desirable (which is a limitation of the study). The field of counseling is committed to multicultural competence in skills, knowledge and awareness, which could make it difficult for counselor educators to acknowledge problematic behaviors in students who are different from themselves. Research has indicated that White counselors tend to favor the colorblind approach in disposition cases (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000). Yet fear of responding in a way that appears insensitive may have contributed to responding in socially desirable ways on this instrument. More exploration is needed in this area. While recent literature has addressed how to be culturally responsive when intervening with counseling students' problematic behavior (Goodrich & Shin, 2013), there is a lack of research regarding culturally responsive performance standards. Until the counseling profession establishes clear performance expectations that are culturally sensitive, the tension between colorblind and culture-attentive expectations will continue to complicate responding to PPC. For example, class performance often has an evaluation component concerning class participation. If a student is from a culture where students do not contribute unless called upon by the professor, then this student may perform poorly because of not understanding expectations. The professor needs to be sensitive to this type of difference and work with the student to develop ways of being successful.

Few participants reported involvement in a legal action related to gatekeeping and remediation with a student demonstrating PPC; however, 30% stated they were reluctant to address a student for fear of retaliation from the student. Given that counselor educators who have been involved in such cases have disclosed the emotional toll these processes take on a program and its faculty members (Dugger & Francis, 2014; McAdams et al., 2007), it seems understandable that there is concern. Therefore, support from ACA, resources in the form of consultation with other campuses and endorsement of gatekeeping processes from one's own campus are essential in navigating this demanding process. Although legal actions are not common, developing appropriate gatekeeping procedures will help prevent negative outcomes (Dugger & Francis, 2014).

In addition, Brown-Rice and Furr (2014) provided that counselor educators and supervisors should "maintain appropriate ethical boundaries and avoid dual relationships with counselors-in-training, inform and educate themselves regarding the proper gatekeeping protocols and limit their own hypocrisy regarding acting in a competent and ethical manner" (p. 5). There has been substantial research and discussion regarding ethical boundaries, dual relationships and establishing proper gatekeeping procedures (Brown, 2013; Kolbert, Morgan, & Brendel, 2002; Morrissette & Gadbois, 2006; Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010). However, there seems to be a lack of attention to the competence of counselor educators and how counselors-in-training perceive educators' professional and personal competence. Do students see faculty members engaging in the same attitudes, skills, behaviors and self-awareness that they are required to adhere to? Are counselor educators modeling the behaviors they want to see in their students or do they hold students to different standards?

Almost all the participants (94%) provided they were aware of their programs' procedures regarding how to address problematic behavior, and 87% were aware of the appropriate intervention to take with students with PPC. However, only 38% stated they had received training from their program regarding how to intervene with a problematic student. In the open-ended responses, participants stated that their programs had established procedures and all faculty members were aware of them; however, they also reported that PPC were minimized or not addressed. For example, one participant provided, "while there is often a policy in place . . . I find that colleagues fail to follow that policy in practice." Another respondent stated, "It is also up to the adviser to address

the issue with the student and create a plan of improvement. Not all faculty do this and this leads to students receiving different treatment." Additionally, a participant shared that colleagues were resistant to "address inappropriate student attitudes, dispositions, personality characteristics, and behaviors unless they reach such a critical threshold that they pose a significant threat to clients or, in some cases, faculty egos." It also appears that how a student is addressed may be related to faculty dynamics. For example, "Political alliances among faculty play a major role in determining which students are targeted for intervention."

Participants overwhelmingly reported they were aware of their programs' procedures and the appropriate interventions to take when they encounter counselors-in-training with PPC. However, they also reported that they struggle with their gatekeeping duties due to empathy, diversity issues and fear of recrimination; half of the participants (51%) stated they would like more information regarding how to identify students with PPC, and 61% would like more information on how to respond to these students. Apparently, counseling programs are doing a good job developing procedures and communicating these procedures to faculty members, as recommended by Gaubatz and Vera (2002). But there remains a disconnect between knowledge about procedures and the ability to implement a response to PPC that may be related to the roadblocks identified in this study.

Counselor educators and supervisors know what they are supposed to do if a PPC has been clearly delineated; however, they struggle with identifying problematic behavior that reaches a threshold of needing to be formally addressed and taking action related to problematic student behaviors. The gap between the recognition that a student is not meeting expectations and the point where formal action is initiated may be filled with the counselor educators' own beliefs about how they can *fix* the problem as well as their own anxieties related to the barriers discovered in this study. The recognition of and intervention with students with PPC can be further complicated by counselor educators having to negotiate faculty politics. It would seem that more attention is needed on assisting counselor educators in negotiating these barriers to ensure students do not gateslip.

Conclusion

The results of this current study provide insight that educators are aware of counseling students with problematic behaviors, and these behaviors are impacting the learning environment, other students in the program and personal stress. It also appears that the largest roadblock present and impacting counselor educators' ability to engage in gatekeeping procedures relates to their empathy veils. The authors of this article perceive that there is a struggle for counselor educators between balancing compassion for students' life circumstances and developmental level with holding them to an acceptable level of professional competence. Counselor educators know it is their responsibility to engage in ethical gatekeeping procedures; however, they do not want to be excessively critical of students. Having an understanding of the empathy veil will assist educators in finding the balance between challenging and supporting students. Counselor educators must not accept students with PPC into their programs or allow them to move on without confronting and remediating their problematic behaviors. Educators need to do their due diligence and be willing to lift their empathy veils and engage in their gatekeeping responsibilities.

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