University of South Florida
Scholar Commons

Graduate Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

1-1-2014

The Importance of Family-Systems Theory in Masters-Level School School Counseling Curriculum: A Study of Faculty Perceptions

Gwen Gold
University of South Florida, ggold@usf.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd

Part of the Educational Psychology Commons, and the School Psychology Commons

The Importance of Family-Systems Theory in Master's-Level School Counseling

Curriculum: A Study of Faculty Perceptions

by

Gwen Gold

DEDICATION

When hopes and dreams become reality, one's soul is transformed; a quiet knowing that all else that follows will be enlightened by the gift and glory of the manifestation of such a life-changing event. Achieving my doctorate in my later years has brought the immense joy of accomplishment to my heart. I hold abundant gratitude to the people who have made this goal possible with an endless well of unconditional support and encouragement.

My loving fiancé came into my life when the dissertation process was most intense, I thank you for your academic brilliance and understanding of the magnitude of accomplishing the heart's desire, unwavering confidence in me, untiring listening ear, and words of encouragement and direction, always when I most needed you.

My extraordinary parents, whose continuous expression of loving support and encouragement, gave me the confidence and courage to complete this rigorous degree, become my best self, never give up on what is most important, set high expectations and goals, certain I could fulfill them, and follow my dreams. Your belief in me was the backbone to my dedication and keeping my eyes on the goal. You are the wind beneath my wings. I am truly blessed.

My children, who spent the greater part of their lives watching me walk, and at times, trudge the road of higher education: I hope you follow the path of your dreams and aspirations, never give up on what's most important to you, and know that anything is possible. I thank you for your patience, love, and continuous support and encouragement. I am truly blessed.

My Chair, Dr. Exum, words cannot describe my gratitude for your compassionate wisdom, insightful guidance, mentorship, and empathic soul. Your gentle caring nature put

everything into perspective, empowering me, knowing that all would fall into place; you cradled my soul. Your steadfast presence and commitment to your doctoral students inspire me to be the best I can be, always. You have been a pillar of strength for me.

My Outside Chair and professor, Dr. Boothroyd, you gave of your patience and time when you were most busy, allowing me to crystallize my intentions. Your caring demeanor equipped me to expand my skills. You exemplify a devoted and accomplished professor.

My professor, Dr. Topdemir, you advocated for my research, contributing your vast knowledge of school counseling programs. Your dependable nature was my bedrock. I look forward to working with you to further the field of school counselor education.

My professor, Dr. Tan, thank you for your impeccable research skills, helping me create the substance of my survey instrument, making my research possible. You sparked thought into my organization and helped me weed the outliers.

Rhonda Ort, you helped me navigate my survey design with tireless effort.

Sandy Turner, your cheerful personality, your willingness to help in all ways possible, your availability to bridge communication with faculty, and your vast knowledge of our department have been an integral part of my dissertation process.

Merry Berger, my dearest friend who is like a sister. You breathed life into my resolve to attain what was so meaningful to me, my Ph.D. You gently nudged me back on the academic path and assured me I had what what was required of me.

My dear and brilliant mentor, Ann. There aren't enough words to express my gratitude for your patience and wisdom. You helped me to actualize my dream of receiving my Ph.D. I look forward to working together, embarking on new research horizons.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ii

LIST OF TABLES

vi

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions of Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) master's-level school counseling program coordinators and faculty members about the importance and relevance of family systems theory and techniques coursework in their program curriculum. Family-systems theory coursework is lacking in two-thirds of those accredited programs, although mandated by their major accrediting body, CACREP. CACREP issued curriculum standards and guidelines to ensure proper training of school-counseling students and the American School Counselor Association—the foundation that expands the image and influence of professional school counselors through advocacy, leadership, collaboration, and systemic change—has issued guidelines for the training and practice of school counselors in family systems. The ASCA goal is to ensure school-counseling professionals are adequately and appropriately trained to work with children and adolescents in the school setting.

Participants were 45 chairs, coordinators, or faculty members of master's-level school-counseling programs from across the United States who consented to participate. Five factors influenced perceptions of the relevancy of family-systems theory for school-counseling-program respondents: the status of a family-systems course in the school-counseling program (stand-alone or not stand-alone), respondent's role as a coordinator or faculty member, single or double accreditation, formal training in family-systems theory, and attitude about family-systems theory as an enhancement to professional development. Results from other analyses included internal

influences, external influences, past and future influences, demographic distinctions, limitations, suggestions for future research, and implications for the field.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Through the years, the school counselor's role has taken on a variety of responsibilities with varying views of emphasis by school administrators, teacher, parents, and other interested parties. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) published a national model for school counseling programs preK–12 in 1995, delineating their recommended emphasis, role definition, and time allocation; however, discrepancies in role implementation continue (Gerrard, 2008). The ASCA national model supports the mission of schools by promoting the Comprehensive School Guidance Program through three components: academic achievement, career planning, and personal/social development. Collaboration with parents, students, teachers, and support staff is required in all domains.

Since the late 1980s, the practice of school counselors conducting family counseling in schools to promote students' welfare has become a recognized adjunct of the personal/social domain (Davis, 2001). Problem behaviors in school children often indicate a manifestation of dysfunctional family patterns and interactions (Mullis & Edwards, 2001). Consequently, school counselors require knowledge of family-systems concepts and techniques to be effective liaisons between the student, school, and their family (Mullis & Edwards, 2001). The mandate of schools and the profession for school counselors to be competent in family-systems approaches rests in the hands of school-counseling programs to educate, train, and supervise school counselors in the systems paradigm (Paylo, 2011). However, transforming the education of school counselors to prepare them to become advocates for the demands of a systems-oriented approach has been

1

slow in coming (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). Understanding the interpersonal network that affects the student by adding course content related to family systems is paramount to comprehending the interpersonal influences on all students in Grades K–12 (Nelson, 2006).

Many colleges and universities throughout the United States offer school counseling as part of their master's curriculum in counselor education. Those colleges and universities base their accreditation standards for their school-counseling curriculum; however, not all universities are uniform in their accreditation affiliations nor are all curricula uniform in their course requirements. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is the accrediting body that standardizes and mandates minimal levels of competency graduating students should demonstrate through designated program coursework. The ASCA is, perhaps, the nation's most influential voice on school counseling; their model advocates for student welfare and family-supportive services. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) promotes high-quality preparation of teachers, school specialists, and administrators in colleges of education at approved colleges and universities.

CACREP-approved counselor-education programs must uphold standards of excellence in their core curricula. The CACREP (2009) standards for curriculum and clinical training in school counseling specify a systems perspective that provides an understanding of family and other systems theories. CACREP Section II outlines the required emphasis for school counseling curricula such that students understand the ways family-school-community collaboration (M.2) enhances student development, well-being, and learning; understand systems theories, models, and processes of consultation in school system settings (M.4); know strategies and methods for working with parents, guardians, families, and communities to empower them to act on behalf of their children (M.5); work with parents, guardians, and families to act on behalf of their children

to address problems that affect student success in school (N.1); and understand the important role of the school counselor as a system-change agent (O.4). These CACREP requirements place the burden of responsibility on educators to provide training in family-systems theory, regardless of whether the trainee will consult or counsel families (Paylo, 2011).

The ASCA national model, a framework for school-counseling programs, is concerned with meeting students' needs in the school setting and "promote[s] student achievement and systemic change that ensures equity and access to rigorous education for every student and leads to closing achievement, opportunity and attainment gaps" (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009, p. 184). Lawson (2004) identified the school counselors' role in six varieties, two of which pertain to knowledge of family systems: (a) parent-centered collaboration—viewing parents as experts and partners, sharing accountability for results, influencing and determining their children's well-being through engagement and well-being, and centering collaboration in the family; and (b) viewing family systems as partners—sharing accountability for results and engagement influences and determining the well-being of children, parents, and grandparents, as well as the future of the family.

More than half (51.9%) of all school counselors are currently not required to take a course in family counseling or systems theory (Perusse, Goodnough, & Noel, 2001). Of 478 universities throughout the United States that offer school counseling as part of their curriculum, 210 (43.93%) are CACREP-accredited universities. After exploring curriculum from the 210 CACREP-accredited universities, data indicated that only 63 school-counseling programs with CACREP accreditation offer a course in family systems. Similarly, less than one-third of school counselors graduating from accredited programs have education and training in family systems. These statistics suggests that more than two-thirds of school counselors graduating from

CACREP-accredited master's-level school-counseling programs may not be adequately prepared to meet the demands of their role as the liaison between students and their families.

Curriculums differ in emphasis, elective-course offerings, and program hours in addressing the personal/social domain of students K–12 as a national-standard competency and indicator (ASCA, 2009b) for school counselors. The adoption of a family-systems approach in addressing the personal/social domain of students K–12 requires school-counseling students be formally educated and trained in family systems. This framework provides an ecological view in the context of the child's interpersonal networks: family, peer group, classroom, school, and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Gerrard, 2008).

Statement and Significance of the Problem

School children belong to a larger intertwining social system (family system). Viewing children as separate from their family system limits the scope of understanding required to address potential familial influence on the problem behaviors of children, ultimately resulting in ineffective treatment strategies. The quality of the service provided by school counselors depends largely on their understanding of the child's problems. Working with the students most important systems—home and school—reinforces positive change. The ASCA national model, A Framework for School Counseling Programs (2012), emphasized that the role of school counselors is to create effective working relationships with parents by tapping resources that may not be available at the school. This role involves viewing family systems as partners, sharing accountability for results and influencing factors and determining the well-being of children, parents, and grandparents, as well as the future of the family.

A survey of student clients of a San Francisco counseling clinic showed that 85% of the children referred by teachers, or parents who were self-referred had significant problems at home

(Gerrard, 2008). Promoting a combined ecosystemic and child-focused perspective in working with difficult, challenging, and at-risk children seems to be more effective than single or individual interventions (Kourkoutas & Xavier, 2010).

Becoming a proactive leader and advocate for students requires school counselors to be taught to construct a blueprint for student success that includes the family and community social systems. Accessing information about familial resources and influences affords the school counselor an opportunity to contextualize the child's problems. Inconsistency in the inclusion of family systems in the school-counseling curricula potentially puts school children at greater risk of lacking provision for appropriate interventions needed to stabilize their academic and socialization experiences in the school environment.

Several researchers advocated for school counselors to be versed in family-systems theory and techniques. Walsh, Barrett, and DePaul (2007) proffered that the new direction for school counseling is a focus on systemic approaches; collaborating with family to create change in the system and emphasize the promotion of student achievement. Eppler and Weir (2009) supported the use of family-assessment tools to assist in planning treatment strategies by helping the school counselor consider relationship dynamics, culture, and other variables that influence family and student functioning. Paylo (2011) tendered that many programs may have placed school counselors at a disadvantage by allowing them to enter schools where they are expected to work with families without being adequately trained to incorporate a family-systems approach with students and families. Lambie and Williamson (2004) submitted that several studies have shown that professional school counselors are managing large caseloads of students who have issues related to family concerns. Therefore, conducting family interventions to promote students' welfare is of great importance.

While realizing the need for appropriate training in this area, a profound discrepancy in school-counseling-program curriculum continues with regard to family-systems theory and techniques in the curricula. The continued absence of such coursework in light of the literature substantiating the demand in the school setting for a systems perspective is problematic. The reasons for this discrepancy, however, continue to be unknown.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory study was to determine the reasons for the lack of family-systems coursework in some CACREP-accredited school-counseling programs despite CACREP requirements (see Appendix A) and those of ASCA (2012). A primary focus of ASCA is to expand the image and influence of professional school counselors through advocacy, leadership, collaboration, and systemic change. In addition, ASCA issues guidelines for the training and practice of school counselors to ensure that school-counseling professionals are adequately and appropriately trained to work with children and adolescents in the school setting.

This study assessed and reports the reasons some CACREP-accredited universities include coursework in family systems as part of their core curricula and other CACREP universities do not. Additionally, this study assessed and reports the perceptions of school-counseling faculty regarding the importance of family-systems theory and coursework to school-counseling students being trained in family systems to meet the demands of the school-counseling profession. In this study, I asked school-counseling faculty to describe their respective school-counseling programs in preparing future school counselors to work with students and their families, thereby helping the population to be served—young people in Grades K–12—with issues that impede their ability to succeed in school.

Research Questions

One of the goals of this study is to determine the degree to which various school-counseling program curricula operationalize this position through coursework.

School counselors can be the first line of defense in detecting student troubles. They are in the unique position of being able to follow a young person over the course of several years. Understanding the young person within the systemic contexts of the individual, the family, and the school is integral to successful interventions. (Lambie & Rokutani, 2002, p. 356)

Two research questions guided this inquiry:

1. Are there statistically significant differences among CACREP college or university faculty in perceived relevance of family-systems theory as part of the program curricula?

2. Are there statistically significant differences in the inclusion of family-systems theory as part of the university-program curricula by professional demographic characteristics of master's-level school-counseling faculty?

Research Hypotheses

There are two primary working hypotheses for this study. The tentative hypotheses are as follows:

H_{01} = There are no statistically significant differences between CACREP college or university faculty in perceived relevance of family-systems theory as part of the program curricula.

H_{a1} = There are statistically significant differences between CACREP college or university faculty in perceived relevance of family-systems theory as part of the program curricula.

H_{02} = There are no differences in the inclusion of family-systems theory as part of the university program curricula by the professional demographic characteristics of master's-level school counseling faculty.

H_{a2} = There are differences in the inclusion of family-systems theory as part of the university program curricula by the professional demographic characteristics of master's-level school-counseling faculty.

Researcher

As a licensed mental health counselor and certified marriage and family therapist, 40% of my practice is devoted to working with school aged children in K–12 who have been referred by school counselors in Sarasota and Bradenton Florida schools. Over the years, I have become aware of a consistent theme with regard to the role of the school counselor: many school counselors do not feel knowledgeable enough or qualified to work with students and their families in family-systems interventions to benefit the student's success in the school setting. Moreover, these school counselors claimed they have not been adequately trained in family-systems theory and lacked confidence about how to intervene on a systemic level. Although most admit they could have profited from having family-systems coursework in their school-counseling graduate program, they also claim that testing and assessments have taken precedent over the personal/social domain in their work. In a systemic approach to counseling, the assumption is that what affects one arena of functioning affects all arenas.

As a researcher and family therapist, the absence of a systems perspective among many school counselors is of great concern. In the school setting, the first point of contact for the student in need of services is the school counselor. Accordingly, it is important that school counselors fully understand that family-systems concepts and techniques support academic achievement. The connection between having knowledge of family systems and implementing that knowledge is of benefit to students in all domains (Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

In my experience working with families and school counselors in furthering the emotional health of students, it has become evident that when a school counselor has knowledge and experience in working with family systems, the presenting problems of the student are usually lessened. The lack of a school counselors' knowledge in a family-systemic approach could perpetuate the symptomology of their students by overlooking important factors related to the etiology of the problem. Holcomb-McCoy (2004) ascertained that literature documents the effective use of family interventions in working with behaviorally disordered students, students suffering from substance abuse, and students with career concerns. The family, not the school, is the single most significant influence on a child's development (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004).

Figure 1 displays the model the study sought to investigate. This figure depicts what motivates some CACREP school-counseling programs to value and implement the guidelines of their accrediting body and those factors that caused some to not employ this accrediting knowledge and information. It shows factors that led school-counseling programs to change the decision-free guidelines issued from CACREP and reinforced by ASCA, the variables that contributed to some school-counseling master's-level programs' adoptions of guidelines, and the determining variables that school-counseling programs used to decide what was included in their curricula.

Conceptual Framework
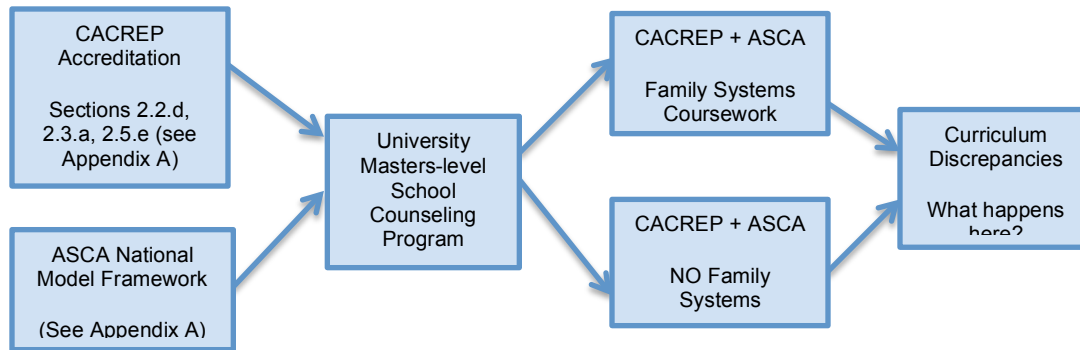
Figure 1. Curriculum-discrepancies model despite Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs and American School Counselor Association guidelines.

Assumptions

According to the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (ACA, 2005), counselors are to "practice only in the boundaries of their competence, based on education, training, supervised experience, state and national professional credentials, and appropriate experience" (C.2.a.). Family work is vital to the consulting and collaboration duties expected of school counselors; therefore, the responsibility of assuring competence in consulting and collaborating with families is a responsibility that rests on counselor educators (Paylo, 2011). A solid understanding of a family systems approach assists school counselors in conceptualizing the impact of the family's dynamics on the student, the student's behaviors, and on learning in the school context (Lockhart & Keys, 1998).

A family-systems model suggests that individuals are best understood through assessing the interactions in an entire family. Symptoms are viewed as an expression of a dysfunction in a family and problematic behaviors in the child serve a purpose for the family. The principles of family-systems theory embrace the notion of wholeness: families are organized wholes with interdependent elements, they are homeostatic in that there is stability in patterns of family

interactions that are often resistant to change, and family systems have circularity in that the interactions are bidirectional (Mangelsdorf & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2007). What affects one family member, affects all family members. The rudiments of the family-systems approach can assist school counselors in understanding the effects of family dynamics on student behavior (Mullis & Edwards, 2001).

To maximize the quality of educational services provided to students, universities need a paradigm shift at the curricular level to better prepare all school-based counselors to proactively confront the challenges of students and the difficulties counselors face in serving those students (Koller & Bertel, 2006). School counselors are in the unique position of being able to bridge the gap between families, the school, and students, as a liaison and supportive resource. To establish this collaborative relationship, the school counselor requires education to identify how systems interface with one another and the bearing of that interface on students outside the home environment. Evidence shows an increasing number of children and adolescents enter schools each day struggling with learning, emotional, interpersonal, and behavioral problems that affect their psychosocial and academic potential and development (Kourkoutas & Xavier, 2010). Relying on psychopathology as an indicator of the problem can be misleading for the child and the intervention recommendations.

Delimitations

Because this study was confined to the perceptions of university faculty, the attitudes and opinions of practicing professional school counselors were not reflected. I did not study unaccredited programs. Also, I did not explore state certification and licensure requirements in this study, which may have affected program hours and curriculum content, thereby eliminating

those variables as influencing core curricula requirements. Finally, I studied only university school-counseling programs in the United States.

Limitations

Limitations of the study include subjective answers by faculty members who may or may not have had training in family-systems theory as part of their coursework. Faculty members who are not familiar with family-systems theory could minimize its' impact on their ability to perform their job effectively. Another limitation of the study is that some school-counseling faculty may not have participated in the study because they may not have received the questionnaire. Dissemination of the study was determined by the university faculty chair/program coordinator and some faculty members may have been missed. Though I assumed all participants would answer the survey truthfully, response bias was possible.

In this study, I did not explore state certification and licensure requirements that may affect program hours and curriculum content, thereby limiting the inclusion of those variables as influential on core curricula requirements. The ASCA (2013) database of universities that are CACREP-accredited universities may not have been updated at the time this study was completed. Also, some CACREP-accredited school-counseling programs may not have updated their websites to reflect changes in their curricula.

Definition of Terms

Following is a list comprised of key terms used throughout this study and their definitions.

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) national model. The ASCA developed a framework for practicing professional school counselors to implement in their school-counseling

programs. The ASCA national model promotes the themes of school counselors as leaders, advocates, collaborative team members, and supporters of systemic change.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). CACREP is an independent agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation to accredit master's degree programs in a variety of counseling professions including school counseling. Accreditation entails assessing a program's quality and its continual enhancement through compliance with the CACREP standards.

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). NCATE (2002) is an accrediting body that promotes high-quality teacher, school specialist, and administrator preparation. Using NCATE unit standards, a group of examiners, known as the Board of Examiners, conducts an onsite visit and evaluates the unit's capacity to effectively deliver its programs.

Family systems. Families influence their members on values, beliefs about self and others, and typical patterns of behavior. Families are systems of interconnected and interdependent individuals, none of whom can be understood in isolation from the system.

Systemic approach. A systemic approach is a framework that guides school counselors to form an ecologically valid view of a child's problem. Counselors understand individuals in a social context. A systemic approach assumes that a child is part of a unit of interconnected people where a change in one part reverberates through the unit. A child belongs to the family system as well as the school system.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 presented background information, a statement of the problem, significance of the study, the conceptual framework of the study, questions guiding the inquiry, research hypotheses, delimitations, limitations of the study, and definitions of terms.

The following chapter will describe recent research proposing the inclusion of family-systems-theory coursework in school-counseling curricula. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bioecological theory and family-systems theory provide a theoretical framework for the proponents of family-systems coursework in school-counseling core curricula. The need for this specialized training will be critically reviewed, thereby laying the groundwork for a discussion of the methods used in this study.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organization of the Present Chapter

Transforming the education of school counselors to prepare them to become educational leaders who serve as advocates for the equitable treatment of all children demands a system-oriented approach (Hayes & Paisley, 2002). This literature review will examine previous research illustrating the need to broaden the scope of curriculum of school counselors to include content related to complex social systems and to look at the present understanding of learning as both academic and contextually oriented as it relates to school counseling, professional competencies, bioecological-systems theory, and family-systems theory.

Historical Antecedents

School guidance was born out of the Progressive Movement, which sought to change negative social conditions associated with the Industrial Revolution at the beginning of the 20th century. Parsons, Bloomfield, Davis, Reed, and other distinguished pioneers were instrumental in formulating and implementing early conceptions of guidance to a limited number of schools in the United States (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). The method of guidance and counseling in schools was carried out by the appointment of teachers as vocational counselors. However, principals of schools were assigning duties to counselors having little to do with counseling and taking time away from real counseling. The lack of an organizational structure became evident to vocational counselors. As a result, the concept of pupil personnel work became the inaugurating

framework for the educational environment based on bringing pupils from the community into schools to enable them to obtain maximum development (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

As the 20th century unfolded, educational-reform movements became the catalysts in shaping the nature and structure of guidance and counseling in schools. Federal legislation such as the Vocational Education Act of 1946 and the National Defense Education Act in 1958, contributed greatly to the school-counseling movement. ASCA was founded in 1952 to address the role of school counselors and their partnership with principals and teachers. Not until the 1960s were teacher counselors replaced with full-time school counselors termed pupil personnel services, brought under the umbrella of professionals such as school psychologists, nurses, and social workers who serviced children in school. At the beginning of the 1970s, the concept of guidance and counseling for development came to fruition and a comprehensive program came into place. From this springboard came the ASCA national model, which supports the mission of schools by promoting the comprehensive school guidance program, including academic achievement, career planning, and personal/social development. ASCA advocates for the guidance of students toward personal/social development, which in turn leads to academic achievement and career development (ASCA, 2009c).

The concept of family systems as a unit of subsystems belonging to a larger unit is the synthesis of three schools of thought: structural functionalism, inductive reasoning, and general systems theory. As early as 1898, Columbia University offered the first coursework in social work, proposing the concept of the family as a unified, functioning system. Social workers became case workers and visited distressed families in their homes who were unable to travel to a therapists' office. As public awareness increased; psychotherapists such as Freud, Adler, and Ackerman became interested in psychological problems stemming from neurotic conflicts

believed to be caused by the family of origin. Adler invested in the Child Guidance Movement established in 1922 (Horn, 1989), which emphasized that psychological problems began in childhood. The desire of theorists and mental health professionals to have specific guidance in working with families was emerging as a new field of interest. Practitioners began to recognize the possibility that patients' attitudes and behaviors stemmed from family influences (Guerin & Chabot, 1992).

Von Bertalanffy, a biologist and systems theorist, investigated the notion of a biological and psychoanalytic model, inferring that relationships are comprised of feedback loops and patterns in a circular system (as cited in Collins & Tomm, 2009). Von Bertalanffy's work was influential in research by Bateson, Haley, and Jackson, who began studying the functioning of families and the emotional dynamics of their interplay. Their work emphasized the importance of positive feedback loops in family systems. This investigation became the platform for a structural framework adopted by subsequent family therapists embracing the notion that families are self-supporting systems with subsystems and rules that govern the individuals within the framework (as cited in Collins & Tomm, 2009).

Family-systems theory attempts to understand the human condition in an interrelated manner in a social context. School children belong to an interlacing system of family, school, community, and culture. "Systems theory provides a framework that guides us to form an ecologically valid view of the child's problem—the unit of interconnected parts where a change in one part is reverberated throughout the unit" (Fish & Jain, 1988, p. 296).

School Counselor Competencies

ASCA, the school-counseling division of the ACA, has a current membership of more than 29,000 school-counseling professionals according to their website. Certification in school

counseling is an endorsement from an institution of higher education, stating that a student has successfully completed that institution's requirements for school-counseling licensure. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), licensure requirements differ greatly by state, occupational specialty, and work setting. Some states require school counselors to hold a state school-counseling certification and to have completed at least some graduate coursework; most require the completion of a master's degree. Some states require school counselors to be licensed, which generally entails completing continuing-education credits. Some states require public school counselors to have both counseling and teaching certificates and to have had some teaching experience.

In a national study, Perusse and Goodnough (2005) explored 568 school counselors' perceptions of graduate preparation. Elementary and high school counselors ranked 24 content areas in order of most important to least. The researchers took the content areas from a compilation of CACREP standards: couple and family counseling ranked among the lowest, although consultation with parents were second and third on the list. The researchers found great variability in what counselor educators require school-counseling students to take as course requirements. The findings revealed that the majority of university programs offer a core set of courses for all counseling students, regardless of their specialization, with the addition of one or two courses designed for school-counseling students. The implication of this study is that the varying discrepancies in course requirements necessitate a governing body that offers a unified vision of curriculum content for school counselors and, in doing so, influences the professional identity of the school counselor.

The most essential support system for a child is the family system, followed by the school system as the next most influential force in a child's development (Paylo, 2011). In exploring the

value of integrating family-systems theory into school-counseling curriculum, "historically, school counselors have been placed in a difficult position by not preparing them for the demands of incorporating family systems and community collaboration into clinical practice" (Paylo, 2011, p. 140). The ACA Code of Ethics states that counselors practice only in the boundaries of their competence, based on education, training, supervised experiences, state and national credentials, and appropriate experience (Paylo, 2011). If family work is a vital part of collaboration and consultation with supporting units outside the school environment, and it is an ethical issues that counselors practice only in the boundaries of their competence, based on education, it would stand to reason that school-counseling programs may benefit from the integration of family-systems theories into their core curricula.

Galassi and Akos (2004) discussed the challenges of updating and enhancing current models of school-counseling programs to provide comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling to counselors in promoting healthy youth development through direct services and consideration of influential environments for young people. The number of children's and adolescents' developmental assets is proportionate to their success in school, maintaining good health, and avoiding at-risk behaviors. The family system is considered to be an external asset that has the ability to either foster or impede the development of healthy young people. Current contemporary school-counseling models are limited in their developmental nature with respect to theory and research, grounding the programs in a sound framework of developmental theory. The authors proposed that school-counseling programs be rooted in a firm foundation of developmental principles with proposed outcomes and called for developmental advocacy to modify and enhance the school counselor's role by empirically identifying the social-contextual conditions that facilitate student achievement and positive youth development; a supportive

19

counseling approach extending beyond the school environment to the family and surrounding community. "Promoting healthy development and competence is at least as important as preventing problems and will serve the same end" (Galassi & Akos, 2004, p. 153). Education and training in family systems are the bedrock from which school counselors come to understand the underpinnings of development in the context of the family environment.

Program Competencies

Professional competencies begin at the level of education and training. CACREP recognized the appropriateness of integrating family-systems approaches into school-counseling curriculum (2009) in Section II. G. 2. d. stating "individual, couple, family, group, and community strategies for working with and advocating for diverse populations, including multicultural competencies." Integration of "theories of individual and family development and transition across life-span" (CACREP); and "a systems perspective that provides an understanding of family and other systems theories and major models of family and related interventions" (CACREP, Section II. G. 5. e.) are also essential family-training components. CACREP requirements name educators as responsible for providing training in family-systems theory, "regardless of whether the trainee will consult or counsel families or work in schools or agencies" (Paylo, 2011, p. 142). Dahir et al. (2009) proffered that school counseling has gone through substantial changes over the past 10 years, and the degree to which school counselors have acquired the skills to successfully implement comprehensive school-counseling programs largely depends on their training. In surveying school counselors, Dahir et al. found that school counselors consulted with parents infrequently compared to the need of supportive services required in the personal–social growth of students. Helping students acquire the interpersonal

and intrapersonal skills to develop and manage relationships and ultimately prevent problems was rated above other responsibilities such as mastery of academic skills.

House and Sears (2002) proposed the critical need to prepare school counselors to be leaders and advocates. School counselors must actively work to remove barriers to learning, teach students how to help themselves, and teach students and their families how to access support systems and manage the bureaucracy of the school system. These necessary pragmatic changes can only come about by understanding the interplay of family systems (House & Sears, 2002).

Peruse and Goodnough (2005) referred to a study whereby school counselors rated the demands of their job; counseling theories, personal problems, and consultation were the most highly ranked, and the task of parent education rated among the lowest scores. The authors called for revisions of curriculum content in school-counselor preparation programs by considering the demands of the growing profession.

For school-counseling programs that are guided by CACREP accreditation, the ACA code of ethics is the standard of practice for practicing professional school counselors, members who are also school-counseling directors/supervisors, and counselor educators. In 1995, ASCA developed national standards for students to better define the role of school counseling in the U.S. educational system to establish similar goals, expectations, support systems, and experiences for school-counseling students (ASCA, 2004).

ASCA (2004) published national standards for students to encourage school counseling programs to implement strategies and activities to support and maximize each student's ability to learn. The three domains include academic development, career development, and personal/social development. Under the domain of academic development, Standard C states

students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home and in the community. Under the domain of personal/social development, the following standards guide school counseling programs to provide the foundation for personal and social growth as students progress through school and into adulthood. PS:A1.11 states "Identify and discuss changing personal and social roles," PS:A1.12 states "Identify and recognize changing family roles," and PS:A2.5 states "Recognize and respect differences in various family configurations." ASCA's (2004) national standards identify and prioritize the specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills students should be able to demonstrate as a result of participating in a school-counseling program.

The National Center for Transforming School Counseling's (2003) Transforming School Counseling Initiative promotes school counselor's ability to connect with students' social networks to resolve student problems; hold brief counseling sessions with individual students, groups, and families; and coordinate school and community resources for students and families to improve student achievement. This nationwide initiative is focused on the significant role of the school counselor and is primarily concerned with the development and preparation of school counselors and the new vision for the direction of the profession (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). Being knowledgeable of systems theories and family interventions is crucial to implementing the goals of the National Center for Transforming School Counseling, which reflect the evolving demands of the school counselor.

Many school counselors, counselor educators, and school administrators agree the school counselor's role is to encourage family participation as an integral part of working with students. Standards have been erected to further the education and training of school counselors to understand the dynamics of the family system. Despite this increased attention to family

counseling and interventions in schools, school-counseling programs fail to include family systems as either a core course requirement or an elective course.

Bioecological-Systems Theory

The ecological approach offers school counselors a framework in which to address at-risk behaviors, systemically (Edwards, Mumford, & Serra-Roldan, 2007). The consideration of each student from various perspective in microsystems, mesosystems, and macrosystems allows the school counselor to assess the situation from all levels of contributing factors. Focus on reciprocal interactions in each context eliminates the traditional perspective of identifying deficits and pathology before offering ecological intervention as a more positive approach. Ecological assessment requires an understanding of the processes that affect the student prior to implementing interventions.

People do not exist in isolation; they are part of larger systems (Lambie & Rokutani, 2002). Using circular reasoning, one can evaluate interaction patterns with a system and between systems. The concept that people function in relation to each other and are influenced by one another allows the school counselor to move away from the individual as the sole recipient of the problem and instead promote the growth-producing behaviors in families and related systems (Lambie & Rokutani, 2002. The new counseling framework in school settings must be treated holistically at the elementary school level or children's difficulties may increase the probability of more serious psychosocial and academic problems in adolescence (Kourkoutas & Xavier, 2010).

Gysbers and Henderson (2001) delve into the organizational framework for school counseling programs set by ASCA (2009a) and illuminated the responsive services of school counselors. They emphasized the need for school counselors to have special training and possess

skills to respond to students' current needs and concerns by involving the support of parents and all necessary relationships to assist in identifying problems, causes, alternatives, possible consequences, and actions, when appropriate. Aligned with bioecological-systems theory, the authors indicated that the 21st century brings a new set of challenges such as changing structures of families and the increase of divorce; an increasingly pluralistic and global society; an increase of violence in homes, schools, and communities; and the spread of transmittable diseases. They suggested that comprehensive guidance and counseling programs consider educating future school counselors using a systems approach.

Family-Systems Theory

The paradigm shift from individual thinking to family-systems thinking must occur at the level of educating school counselors to underline the importance of student advocacy through family-systems dialogue (Paylo, 2011). A family-systems perspective affords the school counselor an opportunity to effect change on the level desired to impact change. School counselors who are cognizant of family influences are better able to assess a student, whether or not the family is present (Davis, 2001). School counselors who hold a family-systemic focus can increase their effectiveness with parents and students (Mullis & Edwards, 2001). An additional benefit to understanding the rudiments of the family-systems approach is that school counselors can assist faculty and staff in understanding the effects of family dynamics on student behavior. In turn, teachers may be more compassionate and willing to take a different approach with students exhibiting behavioral problems, knowing that the student is responding to family circumstances.

Limited discourse exists regarding how to train school counselors to use a family-systems perspective, even though school counselors and other school personnel have recognized the

significant relationship between family functioning and student behavior (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). The traditional training of school counselors to work with students either individually, in small groups, or in classrooms, detracts from issues that are often linked to the social context of the child: their family and community.

Nelson (2006) advocated for family-systems training in school-counseling programs with the intention of school counselors helping families make lasting positive changes in family structure. Changes in the family structure help a child give up symptomatic behavior. With the changing economy, many families do not have the means to pay private practitioners and often turn to the school counselor to assist with their child's problematic behavior that often interferes with learning. Parents turn to school counselors for suggestions and interventions. When parents seek help with child-management issues, professional school counselors trained in systems theory and techniques have a unique perspective at their disposal to assist with improving family functioning (Nelson, 2006).

Critical Analysis of the Literature

Amatea and Clark (2005) used a grounded-theory methodology to assess the conceptions that school administrators hold regarding the role of school counselors. The researchers were interested in identifying perceived roles of school counselors by school administrators to gain a deeper understanding of the demands of today's school counselors and the expectations of school personnel, parents, and the community that assert pressure on school administrators to expand the role of the school counselor beyond assessments, life-skills, and career development. The authors purposefully selected study participants based on their ability and interest in explicating their experience in working with school counselors and articulating how they felt the school counselors' role should be structured. They chose 26 principals and assistant principals who

worked in elementary, middle, or high schools for at least 2 years and worked in a school

employing at least one school counselor on a full-time basis. The sample included 14 women and

12 men and the average length of time employed was 10 years. Amatea and Clark gathered data

in individual interviews, then transcribed and analyzed them. Emergent themes were that

academic difficulties were not isolated factors that happen to children; the need for a holistic

systemic approach by the school counselor is warranted; one-third of the study participants

reported they expected the school counselor to function as a consultant for teachers and parents

and to have specialized knowledge about appropriate intervention strategies to approach the

family system; counselors were expected to be concerned with the whole child's academics and

social or family, and to help teachers and parents help the child; and school counselors should

provide direct interventions with children and their families. The findings from this study have

significant implications for school-counseling programs and the inclusion of family systems as

core curricula.

 Nelson (2006) conducted a case study using the strategic family approach to offer school

counselors and school-counseling training programs. The value of training in systems theory is to

make lasting positive changes in family structure and to avoid costly interventions that families

may not be able to afford that put the child at risk for continued negative behavior and thereby

negative consequences. The technique used for the case study was based on Selvini-Palazzoli's

strategic family therapy, which lends itself to working with clients in the school setting. This

method has been recommended to school counselors working with families and their children

with behavioral problems due to its' brief and effective strategies. Nelson suggested that

involving parents in brief, therapeutic interventions has proven effective in the school setting.

The strategic stance is nonblaming and avoids labeling the child with pathology. The first session

involves the school counselor meeting with parents and enlisting them as change agents. Together they identify the problem and work on the solution. The counselors offer the parents instructions as how to react to the child in the session and the child is then brought into the session. Through prompting and discussion, the school counselor has the opportunity to encourage the parents to adopt a unified front with their child. In the case study presented and subsequent studies by the author, findings showed the child responded positively to good parenting skills. Nelson's research supports the concept that school counselors' intervention strategies, based on systems theory, can offer powerful solutions to help parents strengthen their alliance with each other and promote effective ways of managing children.

Walsh et al. (2007) examined whether newly hired elementary school counselors who worked in urban settings could implement a programmatic, collaborative, and preventive approach to school counseling, embedded in the delivery system of the ASCA national model. The ASCA coined the term "new directions for practice" to acknowledge the shift in demands on school counselors in the 21st century. The researchers surveyed school counselors in Boston, Massachusetts who graduated from school-counseling master's programs and have worked in the field for a minimum of 1–5 years in schools that formed a partnership between the school, community, and university, called Boston Connect. The university established this program to work toward systemic change in school and community agencies. Their mission was to develop coordinated, comprehensive focus on systemic approaches to whole-school change, collaboration with family and community agencies, and the core beliefs that all children have strength and all children can learn (Walsh et al., 2007). In the study, researchers asked school counselors to keep weekly logs to document service-delivery activities. Among the wide range of activities reported, 34% were responsive services and 17% were system-support services. The authors pointed out

that the new direction of collaborative practice accounted for the greatest percentage of overall activities. Walsh et al. demonstrated the demand to work with family systems to enhance the academic and emotional well-being of the child in promoting a healthy and positive school climate.

Holcomb-McCoy (2004) presented the use of the family autobiography to fill the gap in training school counselors in family-systems theory. The purpose of the research was to describe the use of a specific teaching tool, the family autobiography, as a means to promote school-counselor students' understanding of systems theories when working with children. "The key emphasis or rationale for this type of activity is to examine patterns of interpersonal behavior as well as other systemic characteristics in one's family origin" (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004, p. 23). Four sections comprise the model used: (a) a genogram, (b) a time line of significant family events, (c) an interactional description of one's family, and (d) a discussion of the influence of these events on the individual's current life. Participants were from a northeastern, urban college and totaled 32 master's-level school-counseling trainees; 29 were women and participants were ethnically diverse. The family autobiography assignment is currently being used in the core school-counseling course, Introduction to Family Counseling, at the University of Maryland at College Park (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). Because of the sensitive nature of this activity, the instructor needs to follow ethical guidelines from the ACA, grade the assignment on effort versus content, provide students with referrals to counseling services if a reaction occurs, and give students the option of doing a case-study approach by participating in the study should they prefer. Competent faculty in family systems are central to teaching family-systems theories. Holcomb-McCoy asked participants to evaluate the efficacy of completing a family autobiography aligned with their understanding of family systems and relational patterns. The

28

results of the study indicated that participants better understood their families' communication patterns, behaviors, and beliefs, and were able to understand the impact of their family characteristics on their present relationships (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). This study supported the need for family-systems training at the core curricula level to prepare school-counselor trainees to meet the challenges of the students with whom they will be working in schools.

In defining the role of the school counselor, Adams, Benshoff, and Harrington (2007) reported on a study addressing student referrals that were teacher-initiated and based on family structure, gender, and race. The researchers included secondary data from the National Education Longitudinal Study. They discussed factors affecting referrals such as that the behavior of a child often reflects disruption in a family unit through academics and behavior of the child, which prompts teachers to refer the child to the school counselor for services. Students who experience family structural changes such as divorce, remarriage, or death may be referred more frequently than students in structurally stable homes. These researchers considered how often and for what reasons teachers referred students in Grades 10–12 in hopes of ensuring that the functions school counselors perform are consistent with the national standards for school counselors and their training. Participants were those who reported living in intact families and who were continuously enrolled in school. Researchers restricted analysis to African American and European American populations. They grouped participants into four categories according to their family structure: one group had married biological parents, two groups had parents who divorced at different intervals throughout the rearing of the child and both remarried, and the final group had parents who divorced and one parent remarried. Findings showed that teachers referred 12% of adolescents from intact families with biological parents; teachers referred 20–46% of adolescents from unintact families. The authors clearly demonstrated the need for a

29

comprehensive, holistic approach by school counselors and for a program training evaluation in accommodating the school's need for a systemic approach in the school counselor's role.

Chapter Summary

A review of the literature revealed that several authors advocated for family-systems theory to be required of school-counseling-preparation programs. However, a paucity of literature investigated the reason(s) school-counseling programs in the United States do not have family-systems theory as part of their curricula. The purpose of this study is to (a) identify the variety of reasons that family-systems courses exist in school-counseling curricula, (b) discern the variety of reasons family-systems courses do not exist in school-counseling curricula, and (c) gather information on the perceptions of school-counseling faculty as to the relevance of family-systems coursework in school-counseling programs in accordance with ASCA's national model and CACREP accreditation. Previous research investigated the needs of the student, the family, and school administrators for school counselors to develop a holistic and systemic view of supportive services. Additionally, various accrediting agencies and professional organizations identified the professional role of a school counselor in family inclusion and interventions, the need for curricula reflecting a systems approach, and techniques of various family-systems approaches as they apply to family-systems interventions in the school-counseling framework.

The gap in the current literature is the lack of information concerning why some university programs require school-counseling trainees to take family-systems theory and techniques as part of their core curricula and why some do not. The following chapter will discuss the methods by which I collected and analyzed data.

CHAPTER 3:

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The previous section suggested the importance of educating school-counselor students in family-systems concepts and techniques for them to better understand the students with whom they will work. This study was a survey of counselor-education faculty nationwide about their perceptions of the importance of family-systems theory in school-counseling-preparation programs. Chapter 3 includes discussion of the design of the study, the structure, and methodology. I will also describe the participants and setting, the data-collection procedures, instrumentation, the preliminary investigation, pretesting, and statistical analysis.

Research Questions

The ASCA website database listed the 478 college and university graduate-school counseling-preparation programs in the United States. Additionally, I reviewed these program websites to identify which programs are CACREP accredited. I then explored how many CACREP-accredited universities offer family-systems theory in their curricula and vice versa. This review revealed that of 478 school-counseling programs, only 210 (43.93%) are CACREP accredited and 63 (30%) of the CACREP-accredited programs offer family-systems theory as part of their curricula. Thus, more than two-thirds of all school-counseling-preparation programs in the United States do not offer family-systems theory as part of their curricula. Given that coursework in family systems is a requirement of the accreditation body for professional

counseling (CACREP), its absence in the majority of school-counselor-preparation programs illustrates the significance of the following research questions.

1. Are there statistically significant differences among CACREP college or university faculty in perceived relevance of family-systems theory as part of the program curricula?

2. Are there statistically significant differences in the inclusion of family-systems theory as part of the university program curricula by professional demographic characteristics of master's-level school-counseling faculty?

Research Hypotheses

These are the working hypotheses:

1. There are statistically significant differences between CACREP college or university faculty in perceived relevance of family-systems theory as part of the program curricula.

2. There are differences in the inclusion of family-systems theory as part of the university program curricula by the professional demographic characteristics of master's-level school-counseling faculty. Sue, should this also state 'there are statistically significant differences between CACREP....etc.?

Design and Survey Development

Preliminary Investigation

I spent the final semester of my PhD coursework supervising school-counselor interns at the University of South Florida. In our weekly meetings, the interns talked about their experiences in the school setting. They spoke about emotional and behavioral issues that were

interfering with a child's success academically and socially. I asked about parental involvement and whether the intern had met with the family to understand the context of the child's behaviors. The interns were perplexed as to why they should meet with the parents and subsequently, what they should be doing with regard to family systems. Each week the interns would discuss cases and inquire into how to approach the child from a family-systems perspective. After spending a semester with the school-counselor interns and discussing family-systems concepts and techniques, I became aware of the need to educate school-counselor students in family-systems theories.

I began my inquiry by clarifying CACREP standards for curriculum in school-counseling programs and discovered that knowledge in family systems is part of their accrediting standards. I proceeded to identify colleges and universities on the Listserv of ASCA's membership database of school-counseling degree programs that are CACREP accredited, chosen because of ASCA's high regard for CACREP standards of excellence (ASCA, 2012). I explored the program content of all 210 CACREP-accredited master's-level school-counseling programs to find out which offer family systems as part of their curricula and which do not. This was accomplished by going into the program's course catalog and examining the curriculum for the school-counselor program. This exploration revealed discrepancies in coursework that educated and prepared school counselors for their professional role with regard to family-systems-theory concepts and techniques.

Pretesting

According to Dillman (2000), pretesting has always been a highly regarded part of questionnaire design. The author divided the pretest process into four sequential stages: (a) the inclusion of all necessary questions, (b) the elimination of unnecessary questions, (c) the use of

categories that will allow for comparison responses to other surveys (if available), and (d) the merits of modernizing categories versus keeping categories as they may have been in other studies (if available). Dillman pointed out that this process can only be addressed by people knowledgeable in the field.

I derived the family-systems coursework questionnaire (see Appendix D) from previous research (Paylo, 2011; Perusse & Goodnough, 2005; Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004) identifying the standards of excellence (CACREP, 2009), relevance, and demands of the profession to include family-systems theory and techniques in school-counseling-program curricula. I asked about the ASCA and CACREP standards on the web-based survey and answers reflected the inquiry into the interpretation of these standards. Survey questions also included faculty perceptions of a systems approach.

To understand the similarities and differences among programs with regard to family-systems training, I asked school-counseling faculty nationwide about their position in the program (chair, coordinator, or faculty); program credit hours; previous faculty experiences in a school setting; course content; and whether their school-counseling program curricula is designed to satisfy state certification and licensure, CACREP, ASCA national model, or other accrediting bodies. Respondents had little risk in completing the web-based survey, as I patterned the questions on the national school-counselor standards, CACREP, and empirical evidence-based literature. Most school-counseling faculty are familiar with the standards of their profession. Confidentiality was assured as respondents were not identified by name.

I disseminated the web-based pretest survey to six school-counselor-program faculty who are employed at CACREP school-counselor-preparation programs and are familiar with CACREP standards and the ASCA national model, either as part of the school-counselor

program or who have been school counselors in the field prior to becoming faculty members, and were either tenured or on a tenure track. This pretest was intended to refine the content, conciseness, and relevance of the questions to improve clarity on items that might have been confusing or offensive, and to add questions that were overlooked. Feedback was incorporated into the survey.

Establishing Validity

I derived the survey questions from the literature (Paylo, 2011; Perusse & Goodnough, 2001; Perusse et al., 2004). "Claims to validity involve some demonstration that the researcher's data and analysis are firmly rooted in the realms of things that are relevant, genuine and real" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 143). I considered the following to assure validity:

1. I provided a clear statement of the aim of the research by e-mail (see Appendix C) to the six randomly chosen participants in the pretest survey.

2. The six pretest participants were faculty chosen from school-counseling-preparation programs who have experience in the field for 10 years or more. I asked them to give feedback on anything that was unclear, any additional options they believe should have been included, or any other information they felt was pertinent. The responses of participants were a measure of the relevance and usefulness of all questions, thereby increasing the content validity of the survey questions.

3. Prior to e-mailing the survey to CACREP school-counselor-preparation programs, feedback and recommendations from the six pretest participants led to revision of the national survey questions.

Participants and Setting

Participants for this study included counselor-education faculty currently teaching in the school-counseling program at a college or university that is CACREP accredited. Participants were school-counseling faculty in the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West regions of the United States. Participants had varying levels of work experience and differing perceptions regarding the importance of family-systems theory and techniques in master's-level school-counseling curriculum.

Methodology and Data Collection

Upon approval of the Institutional Review Board of the University of South Florida, using the Total Design Method (Dillman, 2000), I sent the survey electronically through SurveyMonkey to 210 university department heads (Chairs/Program Coordinators) of CACREP master's-level school-counseling programs throughout the United States. I requested they complete the survey as well as disseminate it to school-counseling faculty members. I e-mailed a cover letter (see Appendix A) with the accompanying link to access the online survey to all university program coordinators who met the criteria of this study. A formal letter (see Appendix C) and a demographic and curriculum questionnaire (see Appendix D) were part of the web-based survey. Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000) postured that response rate impacts representativeness in survey research. The authors found that response rates doubled when researchers sent follow-up reminders. I sent three waves of follow-up e-mails: I sent the first wave 2 weeks after the initial mailing to all program coordinators as a reminder to send the survey to their faculty; I sent the second wave 4 weeks subsequent to the initial e-mail, requesting program coordinators send the survey out to their faculty a second time in hopes of increasing response rate; I sent the third wave 6 weeks after the initial e-mail as a reminder to

36

those universities that had not responded. I used a paging design rather than a scrolling design for this study to minimize the time to complete the study and reduce errors of commission (inapplicable questions based on previous responses; Peytchev, Couper, McCabe, & Crawford, 2006).

This study was a quantitative study using a survey methodology. I compared and quantitatively analyzed a national sample from universities that are accredited and offer school-counseling master's programs as to their interpretation of standards regarding the inclusion of family theories as part of their core curricula. I gleaned survey results through SurveyMonkey. I used a Likert scale for the survey portion of this study to rate and quantify responses. Possible answers included 1 = not at all; 2 = low, minimally, occasionally; 3 = moderately, frequently; 4 = high, usually, significant; 5 = other; indicating the degree of importance of graduate-level training in family-systems theories and technique. At the end of the survey, participants had the option of adding new information or clarification.

A survey methodology enabled me to assess the level and frequency of implementation of CACREP standards regarding coursework in family-systems theory and techniques in master's-level school-counseling-program curriculum and the influential characteristics in demographics between universities that offer family-systems theory as part of their curriculum and those that do not, using an analysis-of-variance (ANOVA) strategy.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stated, "The major characteristics of traditional quantitative research are a focus on deduction, confirmation, theory/hypothesis testing, explanation, prediction, standardized data collection, and statistical analysis" (p. 18). The goal of this study was to determine the extent to which school counseling master's-level programs

adhere to CACREP standards on coursework in family systems and their perceived levels of relevancy in their school-counseling curriculum.

Statistical Analysis

I assigned the responses from the survey a numerical value corresponding to the answers on the Likert-type scale. This allowed for statistical analysis using SPSS software to analyze whether there was a significant difference between accredited affiliations and curricula as well as influencing factors such as faculty position and years practicing in the profession. I used an ANOVA test to compare and contrast answers from the survey. I assessed reliability of four constructs in the survey with Cronbach's alpha: demographics, knowledge of CACREP guidelines, knowledge of family-systems theory, and perceptions of the relevance of family-systems coursework in the curriculum.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the research design and methods employed in the study. This survey study explored interpretations and perceptions of master's-level school-counseling faculty members regarding the implementation of family-systems theory, as governed by their accrediting body, CACREP. I proposed research questions and explained the process of data collection and synthesis. In the proceeding chapter, I analyze the collected data and interpret the findings.

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

This chapter is divided into five sections. Section 1 restates the purpose and main research questions. In Section 2, I describe the method of screening the data, present reliability checks of survey data, and explain the derivation of summated scales. Section 3 addresses respondent demographics. Section 4 presents the results of inferential analyses used to test Research Question 1 about perceived relevance of family systems theory. Section 4 has three sections, each pertaining to a particular assessment. Section 5 provides results, examining relationships between relevance and demographics for Research Question 2. All technical explanations in this chapter are from Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010) unless otherwise cited.

Section 1: Restatement of the Purpose and Research Questions

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify factors associated with differences in school-counseling programs accredited by CACREP about the presence of family-systems coursework. CACREP (2009) is a major accrediting body that has issued guidelines for family-systems coursework in school-counseling programs. ASCA (2012), a foundation that expands the image and influence of professional school counselors, has also issued guidelines for the professional practice of school counseling. The aim of the ASCA guidelines is to ensure that school-counseling professionals are adequately and appropriately trained to work with children and

adolescents in the school setting. Part of the appropriate training of school counselors is knowledge of family-systems theory.

Specifically, in this study I explored school-counseling-faculty perceptions about the relevance of family-systems theory in CACREP-accredited school-counseling programs. In addition, I assessed professional credentials, comparing perceptions across different approaches to family-systems coursework and examining demographics to identify differences that may be associated with different approaches to family-systems coursework. The overall aim was to evaluate how well school-counselor students are prepared to work with students in Grades K–12 who have issues that impede their ability to succeed in school.

Research Question 1. Are there statistically significant differences among CACREP college or university faculty in perceived relevance of family-systems theory as part of the program curricula?

Research Question 2. Are there statistically significant differences in the inclusion of family-systems theory as part of the university program curricula by professional demographic characteristics of master's-level school-counseling faculty?

Section 2. Screening the Data, Reliability Checks, and Summated Scales

Screening the Data

I collected data from an online survey comprised of demographic and perception questions. Demographic data were categorical, whereas Likert-scaled data were continuous. Continuous variables rated attributes such as importance and competency with values ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = not at all important, competent, etc., 2 = minimally, 3 = somewhat, 4 = moderately, and 5 = highly). No survey statements needed to be reverse scored.

I screened all data for entry errors. A total of 45 individuals consented to participate. Of those, six agreed, through informed consent, but then failed to respond to any of the survey statements and were eliminated from all subsequent analyses. The few other missing data points among the remaining respondents did not show any systematic pattern. Consequently there were $N = 39$ respondents, unless otherwise specified.

I screened Likert-scaled variables for normality, linearity, outliers, and homoscedasticity. The data did not show any substantial departures from statistical normality and thus met the assumptions of parametric inferential tests. I used two-way ANOVAs to evaluate perceptions. I cross-tabulated a number of demographic variables to examine their relationships, and examined chi-square tests of independence on tests with inadequate numbers of respondents per cell with Fisher's exact test for small sample sizes instead. I set significance at $p = .05$. I rounded percentages to whole numbers; thus, totals do not necessarily add to 100%.

Reliability Check of Variables

I developed the survey used in the current study and it was not formally validated psychometrically. Instead, I evaluated the data's internal consistency or reliability in two ways. First, I examined the consistency of answers to individual survey statements with visual inspection of descriptive statistics for each variable. Second, I grouped conceptually-similar survey statements and evaluated their overall internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha. I used Cronbach's alpha because (a) the survey was designed with a number of conceptually related statements, (b) conceptually related statements presented a Likert-scaled array of responses (rather than providing dichotomously-scored statements), and (c) the survey was only administrated once. Cronbach's alpha is a commonly employed test of internal consistency for Likert-scaled data that views each statement in each set of conceptually related statements as a

41

retest of another item. In essence, Cronbach's formula generates all possible test–retest pairs of correlations and provides the mean as the reliability index alpha (Cronbach's alpha is not synonymous with the significance level for hypothesis testing, which is also called alpha). Cronbach's alpha ranges for 0 to 1. The closer Cronbach's alpha is to 1, the greater the reliability of the database. Indices of .70 or higher reflect an adequately reliable database.

Perception of Relevancy Variable: Importance of a Theoretical Foundation in Family Systems

Table 1 shows the reliability statistics of survey statements that were conceptually related to the importance of a theoretical foundation in family systems. Reliability statistics in Table 1 indicate that the statements had good internal consistency individually and overall. For individual survey statements, the means showed close agreement and the standard deviations were uniformly low in value. Uniformly small coefficients of variation were another indication of the close agreement among answers to perceptions of the importance of family-system theory to school counselors. Finally, confidence intervals showed that the actual estimated range of survey responses to these statements were also narrow. Overall, they showed strong internal consistency; Cronbach's alpha fell well above the minimally recommended value of .70.

Table 1. Reliability Check of Conceptually-Related Survey Statements on the Importance of Family-Systems Theory, *N* = 40 Respondents

	M	*SD*	*V*	*CI*
Importance of theoretical foundation in family systems	Cronbach's alpha = .93			
When the PSC consults with parents of the child	4.53	0.64	0.14	4.33, 4.73
When the PSC consults with guardians of the child	4.48	0.68	0.15	4.27, 4.69
Concepts of the role of a PSC	4.33	0.80	0.18	4.08, 4.58
When the PSC consults with community systems	4.18	0.78	0.19	3.94, 4.42
Techniques in the role of a PSC	4.03	0.86	0.21	3.76, 4.30
When the PSC consults with school personnel	4.03	1.03	0.26	3.71, 4.35
Total	4.26	0.70	0.16	4.06, 4.46

Note. PSC = professional school counselor; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; *V* = coefficient of variation; *CI* = 95% confidence interval around the mean.

Perception of Relevancy Variable: Adequacy of Addressing CACREP Standards in a School-Counselor-Education Program

A second set of survey statements were conceptually related to the adequacy of addressing CACREP standards in the respondent's school-counselor program. Reliability statistics shown in Table 2 indicate these statements also showed good internal consistency individually and overall. Among the individual survey statements, the means showed close agreement with "moderately adequate" ratings. Standard deviations were uniformly low in value. Further indications of the close agreement among perceptions of CACREP adequacy were the uniformly small coefficients of variation. Finally, confidence intervals showed that the estimated range of survey responses to these statements spanned no more than half a point on the 5-point Likert scale in most cases. Overall, Cronbach's alpha fell above the recommended minimum of .70 for the set of statements measuring overall CACREP adequacy (see Table 2).

Table 2. Reliability Check of Conceptually-Related Survey Statements on Adequacy of Addressing Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs Standards, *N* = 34 Respondents

	M	*SD*	*V*	*CI*
Adequacy of addressing CACREP standards	Cronbach's alpha = .83			
School Counselor as Change Agent	4.79	0.41	0.09	4.65, 4.93
Training in Student Coping Strategies	4.76	0.43	0.09	4.62, 4.90
Parental Engagement in Promoting Student Personal and Social Development	4.59	0.66	0.14	4.37, 4.81
Enhancement of Student Development through Collaboration	4.56	0.56	0.12	4.37, 4.75
Knowledge of Systems Theory in School Counseling Settings	4.56	0.61	0.13	4.35, 4.77
Parental Interventions that Promote Student Academic Success	4.53	0.56	0.12	4.34, 4.72
Parental Empowerment of their Children	4.44	0.61	0.14	4.23, 4.65
Integrating Lifespan Theories	4.41	0.78	0.18	4.15, 4.67
K–12 Intervention Strategies	4.32	0.68	0.16	4.09, 4.55
Family Systems Perspective for Interventions	3.97	0.87	0.22	3.68, 4.26
Total	4.55	0.38	0.08	4.35, 4.75

Note. CACREP = Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; *V* = coefficient of variation; *CI* = 95% confidence interval around the mean.

Perception of Relevancy Variable: Adequacy of Meeting ASCA Standards in their School-Counselor Program

The third and final set of conceptually related survey statements corresponded to the adequacy of addressing ASCA standards in the respondent's school-counselor program. Reliability statistics (see Table 3) of survey statements indicated the statements showed strong internal consistency across individual statements and overall. Among individual statements, the means showed very close agreement, evaluating adherence to the ASCA national model as "highly adequate." The exception was the variable, recognizing changing family roles, which was evaluated as "moderately adequate." Standard deviations were uniformly low in value, especially for individual counseling. Uniformly small coefficients of variation gave further

indication of the close agreement among perceptions of ASCA adequacy. Finally, confidence

intervals showed that the estimated range of survey responses to these statements spanned a half

point or less, again with the exception of recognizing changing family roles. When the

statements were taken together, Cronbach's alpha was greater than the minimally acceptable

range of .70.

Table 3. Reliability Check of Conceptually-Related Survey Statements on Adequacy of
Addressing American School Counselor Association Standards, $N = 36$ Respondents

	M	*SD*	*V*	*CI*
Adequacy of addressing ASCA national model	Cronbach's alpha = .78			
Individual counseling	4.92	0.28	0.06	4.83, 5.01
Group counseling	4.83	0.38	0.08	4.71, 4.95
Integration of ASCA national model into program	4.76	0.55	0.12	4.57, 4.95
Consultation with stakeholders	4.75	0.44	0.09	4.61, 4.89
Systemic prevention and intervention	4.67	0.63	0.14	4.46, 4.88
Coordinating systemic activities to promote student goals	4.67	0.48	0.10	4.51, 4.83
Systemic intervention and advocacy	4.58	0.50	0.11	4.42, 4.74
Respect for family configuration differences	4.58	0.50	0.11	4.42, 4.74
Recognition of changing family roles	4.17	0.70	0.17	3.94, 4.40
Total	4.65	0.32	0.07	4.45, 4.85

Note. ASCA = American School Counselor Association; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; *V* = coefficient of
variation; *CI* = 95% confidence interval around the mean.

Power Analysis

The number of respondents who completed the family-systems survey was small, $N = 40$.

I conducted a power analysis on the GPower 3.1 website for an omnibus ANOVA *F* test with a

medium effect size of .25, alpha = .05, power = .80, and 3 *df* in the *F*-ratio numerator. Power

analysis suggested a sample size of 179. The current database falls short of this by a factor of

five, indicating the results should be viewed with caution and replicated in future studies. I took

steps to maintain the Type I error risk at alpha = .05, and included creating summated scales,

applying Bonferroni adjustments, and combining independent variables in factorial ANOVAs.

Summated Scales

Reliability checks established the empirical basis for reducing the three sets of conceptually related variables or constructs (see Tables 1, 2, & 3) to summated scales. A summated scale is an empirically derived, single measure that represents multiple aspects of a construct in one variable (Hair et al., 2010). Data reduction was pertinent because of small sample size.

Summated scales were derived for each construct for each respondent as the mean answer to conceptually related survey items. Because each summated score was a mean, its possible values ranged from 1 to 5 like the Likert-scaled survey items. Deriving a single measure from multiple related aspects increases reliability and validity because it reduces the measurement error in the original data points (Hair et al., 2010). Summated scales also increased parsimony in the overall number of variables. They allowed me to examine the relevance of family-systems theory at the appropriate level of richness and accurate level of complexity.

I derived two summated scales from elements listed in Table 1 on the importance of a theoretical foundation in family-systems theory. One was the Importance of a Theoretical Foundation with Stakeholders summated scale, which is a summated scale of answers to questions regarding the importance of a school counselor's theoretical foundation in family-systems theory when interacting with the following stakeholders: parents or guardians of the child, other school personnel, and community systems. The other one was the Importance of Family-Systems-Theory Concepts and Techniques summated scale, which was the mean of ratings of the importance of a theoretical foundation in family-systems-theory concepts and in family-systems-theory techniques. The Adequacy of Addressing CACREP Standards summated

46

scale was the mean of the items listed in Table 2. The Adequacy of Addressing ASCA Standards summated scale was the mean of the items listed in Table 3.

I checked the reliability of the summated scales by creating a correlation matrix of each summated scale and the variables used to create it (Hair et al., 2010). The correlation between each individual variable and its summated scale (the item-to-total correlations) should be .50 or better. The correlation between the individual variables on each summated scale (the item-to-item correlations) should be .30 or better. These conditions were met. I present summated-scale descriptive statistics in Section 4 along with inferential analyses that correspond to Research Question 1.

Section 3. Respondent Demographics

A total of 45 respondents consented to participate in the survey. All but two provided demographic information, $n = 43$. The sample contained a 2 to 1 ratio of women ($n = 28$, 65%) to men ($n = 15$, 35%). Most were from the South (49%) or Northeast (26%) regions of the United States, followed by the Midwest (21%). Two respondents, one man and one woman, were from the West (5%).

Figure 2 shows that the majority of respondents were Caucasian ($n = 38$, 88%), with an additional five African Americans, one in each age group, with the exception of 70+ years (12%). Most respondents were in middle adulthood (75%); a quarter were in their 60s or 70s (23%); and just 2% were in their 20s. Of the 41 respondents who provided information on their highest educational level and current academic appointment, most were educated at the doctoral level and outnumbered respondents holding specialist degrees at every level of academic appointment (see Figure 3).
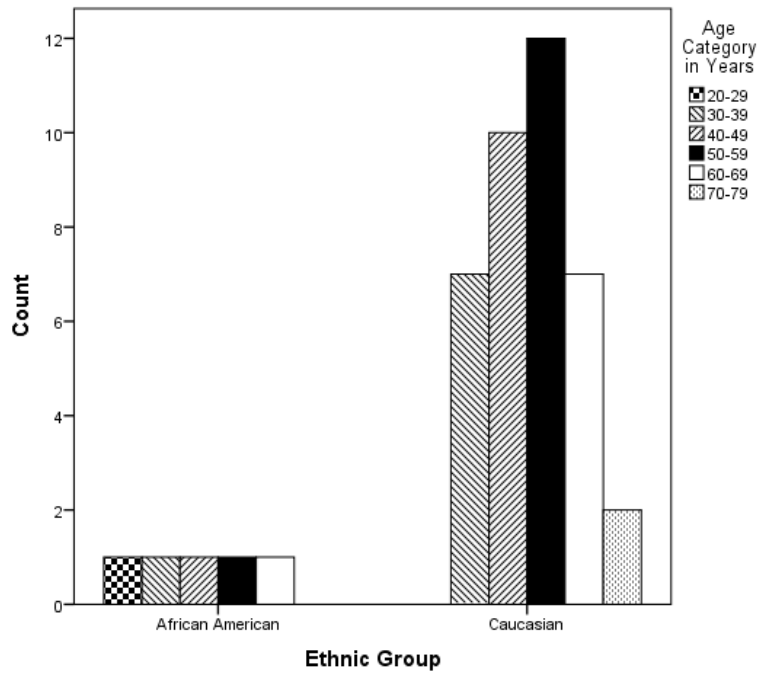
Figure 2. Bar chart of ethnicity by age.
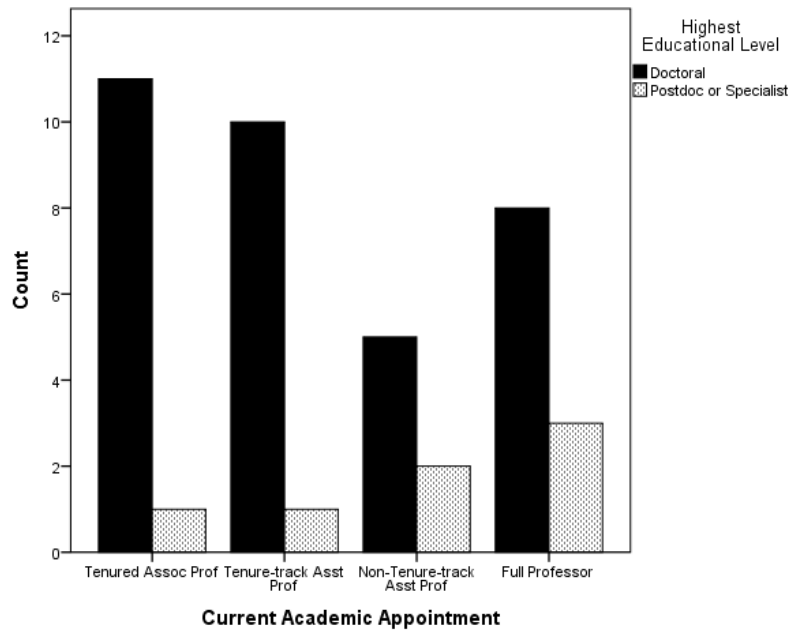
Figure 3. Highest educational level attained by current academic appointment.

As to grade levels, 39 respondents provided information about their experience. Figure 4 indicates that 90% of respondents had K–12 experience. Of those with experience, 71% had a range of experience in grade levels (39% had experience working in elementary, middle, and high schools; 32% had experience working in middle and high schools). Small proportions had experience in kindergartens and elementary schools only (11%) or kindergarten only (11%). As above, 8% of the respondents did not have experience working in these grade levels. Figure 4 also shows that most of the respondents had 10 years of experience or less.
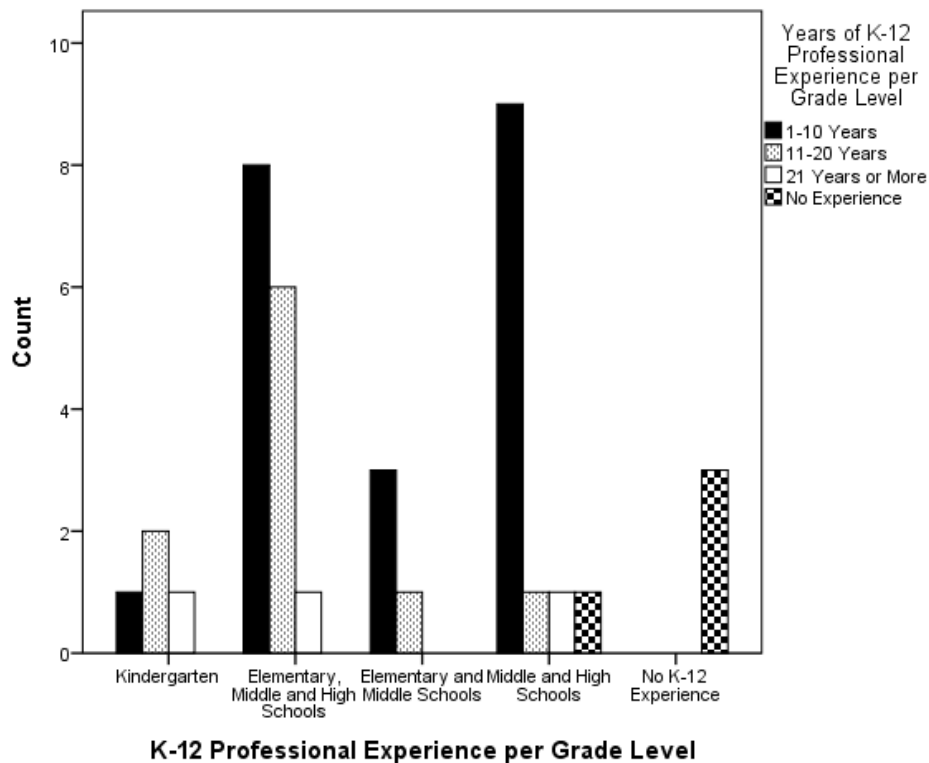
Figure 4. Professional experience across grade levels and years of experience.

No summary statement can be easily drawn about the urban, suburban, or rural settings with which the respondents had experience because the reported experience ranged so broadly. Figure 5 shows that respondents reported seven different combinations. In combination, nearly

half of the respondents had worked in both urban and suburban settings (28%) or in the suburban

setting only (17%). Respondents who had worked in suburban and rural settings or only rural

settings accounted for 28%.
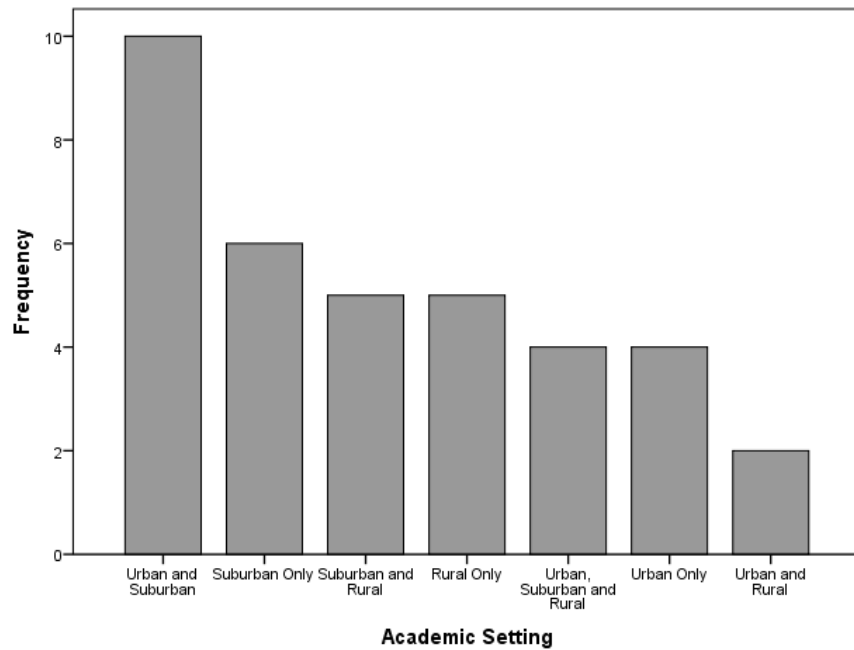
Figure 5. Bar chart of academic settings.

I asked respondents to indicate whether their role in the school-counseling programs was

that of a teacher or counselor (see Figure 6). Most were counselors ($n = 27$, 79%) rather than

teachers ($n = 7$, 21%).
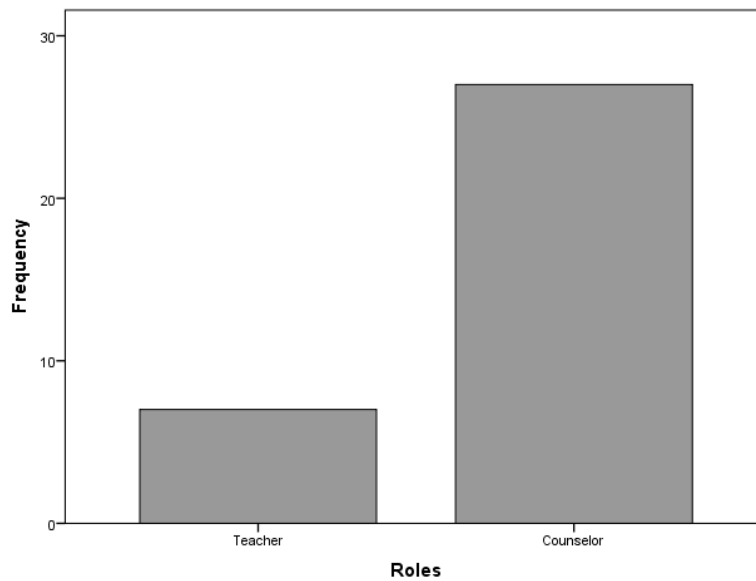
Figure 6. Distribution of respondent roles in school-counseling programs.

The Status of Family-Systems Theory in CACREP-Accredited Master's Degree School-Counseling Programs

I obtained data on school-counseling programs from 39 respondents. This section presents elements of the status of family-systems theory in their school-counseling programs. In preparation for this research, I perused 478 school-counseling programs and discovered that 210 (44%) had CACREP-accreditation. Of the CACREP-accredited programs, 63 (30%) include family-systems theory in their school-counseling curriculum.

Director/Coordinator Roles by Academic Appointment

The majority of respondents were curriculum directors or coordinators of school-counseling programs who were tenured or held tenure-track positions. Figure 6 shows a side-by-side comparison of curriculum directors/coordinators and faculty by academic appointment. About two-thirds of the 41 respondents who answered this query were curriculum directors or coordinators ($n = 30$, 73%). Thus, curriculum directors or coordinators from about half of the 63

school-counseling programs that include family-systems theory in their school-counseling curriculum were included in the current study. Faculty, and curriculum directors or coordinators were approximately equally distributed across tenured or tenure-track positions but included a small number of nontenure track assistant professors ($n = 4$; see Figure 7). In contrast, school-counseling program faculty were about equally distributed across the levels of academic appointments.
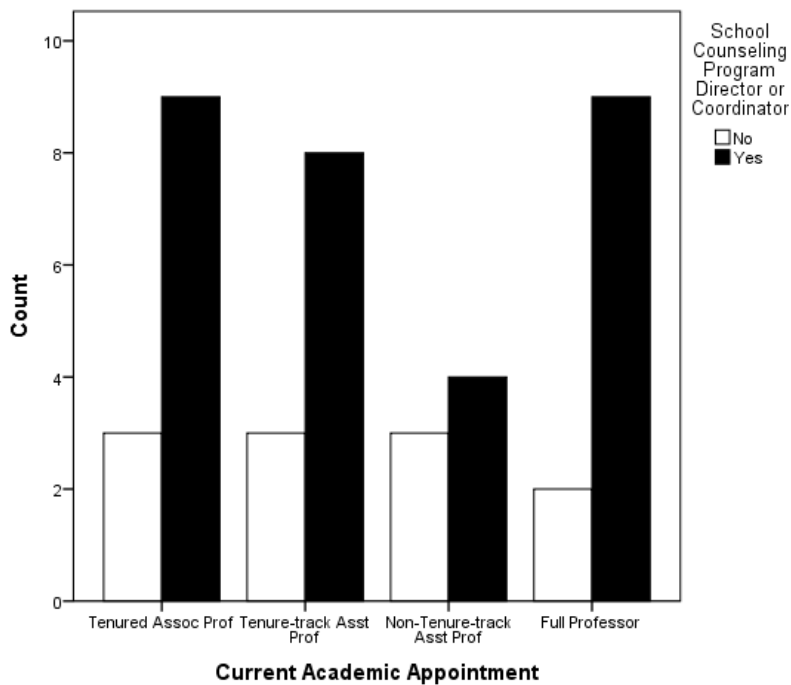
Figure 7. Bar chart of the academic appointment of school-counseling programs directors/coordinators.

Curriculum Director/Coordinator Roles by Accrediting Body

The majority of school-counseling programs represented by respondents were accredited by CACREP and NCATE. The relationship between curriculum director/coordinator roles and accrediting bodies is illustrated in Figure 8, which shows that the majority of respondents were

curriculum directors or coordinators in school counseling programs that were accredited by both CACREP and NCATE.
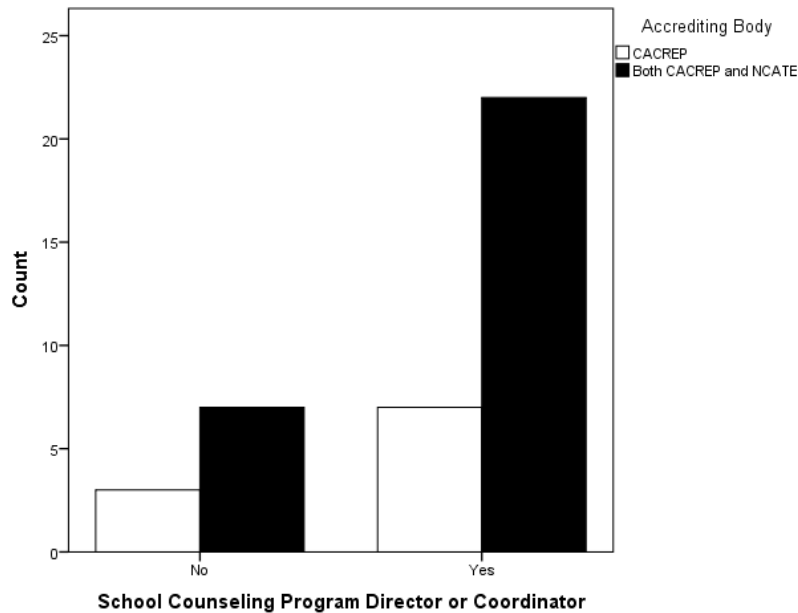
Figure 8. Bar chart of the distribution of curriculum directors or coordinators (Yes) versus faculty (No) by accrediting bodies.

Moreover, the distributions were proportional across roles. Table 4 shows that respondents were fewer faculty ("No" on Table 4) than curriculum directors or coordinators ("Yes" on Table 4) in both CACREP-only accredited programs and CACREP and NCATE-accredited school-counseling programs.

Table 4. Distribution of Curriculum Directors or Coordinators and Faculty by Accrediting Bodies

Curriculum director or coordinator	Accrediting body		Total
	CACREP	Both CACREP and NCATE	
No	3 (8%)	7 (18%)	10 (26%)
Yes	7 (18%)	22 (56%)	29 (74%)
Total	10 (26%)	29 (74%)	39

Note. CACREP = Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs; NCATE = National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Professional Qualifications and Membership in Professional Organizations

Respondents held a broad range of professional certifications, licenses, and related credentials. I collapsed these into two groups to create a professional-qualifications variable with two levels. School professionals included certified school counselors and certified teachers. Counseling professionals included national certified counselors, national-board certified counselors, registered mental health counselor interns, registered marriage and family interns, licensed mental health counselors, and licensed marriage and family therapists. Most school professionals were members of all three professional organizations (see Table 5).

Table 5. Distribution of Professional Organizational Membership by Professional Status

Professional-organization membership	School professionals	Counseling professionals	Total
ASCA, ACA & ACES	14	2	16
ACA &ACES	7	2	9
ASCA & ACA	3	4	7
ACA	2	2	4
ASCA & ACES	1	1	2
ASCA	1	0	1
ACES	0	0	0
	28	11	39

Note. ASCA = American School Counselors Association; ACA = American Counseling Association; ACES = Association for Counselor Education and Supervision.

Student-Body Size Among School-Counseling Programs

I used the estimated number of students matriculating in school-counseling programs in the last 3 years as a proxy for the size of the school-counseling programs. Figure 9 shows that the sample was about evenly divided between large programs of 60 or more matriculating students (53%) and student bodies of smaller size, 20–59 matriculating students (46%).
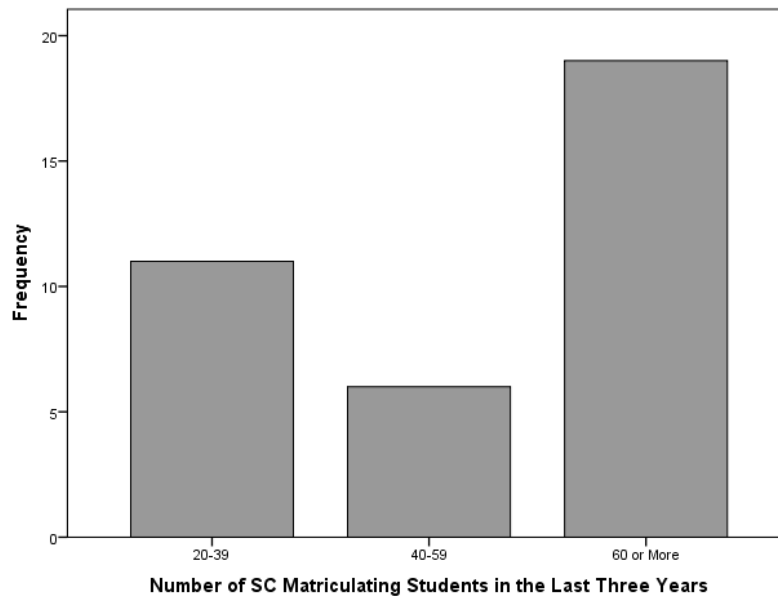
Figure 9. Bar chart of school-counseling program size.

Family Systems-Theory Courses

Most school-counseling programs offered family-systems-theory coursework. Approximately five school-counseling programs offered a family-systems theory course ($n = 33$ programs, 85%) for every one program that did not offer a course ($n = 6$ programs, 15%), $N = 39$.

Core Versus Elective Courses

When I asked respondents whether the family-systems theory course was offered as a core or as an elective course, they responded with five different categories. Not quite half of family-systems theory courses were offered as electives (41%). Another approximate quarter of school-counseling programs offered family-systems-theory courses as core courses (23%), whereas 13% did not indicate whether the course was offered as core or as an elective, and three reported that the family-systems-theory course was either offered as a core or an elective course (8%). Six programs did not offer a family-systems theory course (15%).

When the five categories were collapsed into four categories by combining the three courses that were offered as either a core course or as an elective with the core courses, Figure 9 shows the resulting distribution. Of family-systems theory courses, Figure 10 shows that 41% were elective, 31% were core, 15% of the programs did not offer a course, and 13% of the courses were not specified as core or elective.
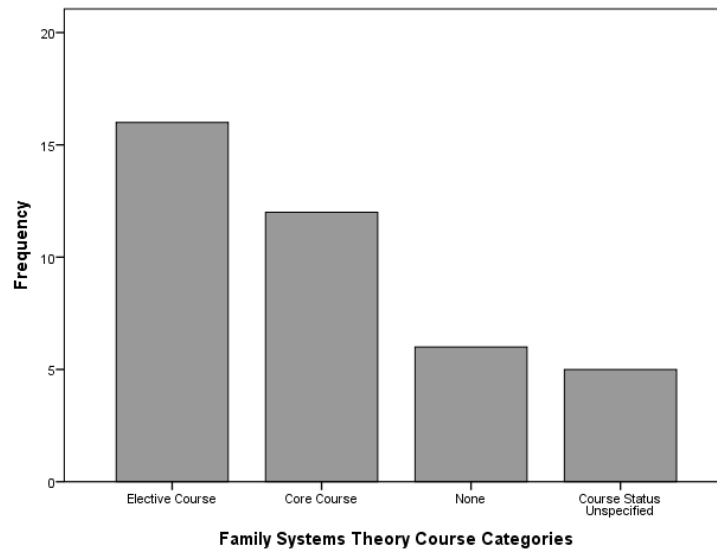
Figure 10. Bar chart of the distribution of family-systems-theory course status.

Course Content by Major Family-Systems Theorists

Table 6 lists the five major family-systems theory theorists from highest to lowest percentage of inclusion in course offerings (bolded italics). Minuchin and Bowen are taught in three-quarters of the school-counseling programs. About two-thirds include Satir. Half of the programs include Haley and Whitaker. Up to a third of the school-counseling programs that offer family-systems-theory courses do not include these major theorists (8% to 33%). A small proportion of school-counseling programs that do not offer a family-systems theory course—5%

to 8%—reported they include reference to all the major theorists except Whitaker in other

courses.

Table 6. Distribution of Major Theorists in Family-Systems-Theory Coursework

Family-systems coursework includes theorist		Offer a family-systems-theory course		Total
		No	Yes	
Salvador Minuchin	No	3 (8%)	3 (8%)	6 (16%)
	Yes	3 (8%)	29 (76%)	32 (84%)
Subtotal		6 (16%)	32 (84%)	38
Murray Bowen	No	4 (10%)	4 (10%)	8 (21%)
	Yes	2 (5%)	29 (74%)	31 (79%)
Subtotal		6 (15%)	33 (85%)	39
Virginia Satir	No	4 (10%)	7 (18%)	11 (28%)
	Yes	2 (5%)	26 (67%)	28 (72%)
Subtotal		6 (15%)	33 (85%)	39
Jay Haley	No	3 (8%)	11 (28%)	14 (36%)
	Yes	3 (8%)	22 (56%)	25 (64%)
Subtotal		6 (15%)	33 (85%)	39
Carl Whitaker	No	6 (15%)	13 (33%)	19 (49%)
	Yes	0	20 (51%)	20 (51%)
Subtotal		6 (15%)	33 (85%)	39
Total		6 (15%)	33 (85%)	

Note. Percentages based on $N = 39$ except for Minuchin, $N = 38$.

Theoretically, programs that incorporated only one or two theorists differed on

perceptions of the relevance of family-systems theory from programs that incorporated three or

more major theorists. Thus, school-counseling programs could be reasonably subdivided by the

number of major theorists in courses and used as a factor to answer the research questions. I

therefore generated a dichotomous categorical theorist variable with two levels: one or two

theorists, three or more theorists. I then cross-tabulated this dichotomous theorist variable with

the course-status variable (four levels: elective, core, none, course status unspecified; see Figure

9); I could not run a chi-square test of independence due to inadequate cell frequencies. Cross-

tabulation showed that every program that offered the course as a core course incorporated three or more major theorists. This suggested that the dichotomous-theorist variable was redundant with the course-categories variable and was not used as a factor in inferential analyses.

 Section 4. Perceived Relevance of Family-Systems Theory in School-Counseling Programs

Research Question 1—Perceptions of Relevancy

Are there statistically significant differences among CACREP college or university faculty in perceived relevance of family-systems theory as part of the program curricula?

H_0: There are no statistically significant differences between CACREP college or university faculty in perceived relevance of family-systems theory as part of the program curricula.

H_1: There are statistically significant differences between CACREP college or university faculty in perceived relevance of family-systems theory as part of the program curricula.

Factors (Independent Variables)

I examined "differences" in Research Question 1 with two separate assessments, both using 2 x 2 ANOVAs. The first assessment used a 2 x 2 ANOVA to examine perceptions of relevancy with course status (yes, offer a stand-alone family-systems-theory course; no family-systems-theory course offered) by curriculum status (school-counseling programs director/coordinator or faculty; hereafter curriculum coordinator). Assessment 1 served as an *in vivo* internal check of differences because it revealed perceptions of individuals who were directly responsible for the curriculum (directors and coordinators) compared to faculty who were not similarly responsible for the curriculum. I reference Assessment 1 below as the Internal Assessment.

The second assessment also used 2 x 2 ANOVAs, but assessed perceptions of relevancy with course status as above (yes, offer a stand-alone course; no course) by accrediting bodies (CACREP-accreditation and CACREP + NCATE-accreditation). Assessment 2 served as an *in vitro* external check of differences related to oversight bodies to see if/how this kind of more remote influence manifested in perceptions. I reference Assessment 2 below as the External Assessment.

The third assessment also used 2 x 2 ANOVAs to assess perceptions of relevancy with formal training in family-systems theory (yes, no) and ratings of the extent to which the addition of training in family-systems theory would enhance professional development. I used this latter variable to create a dichotomous variable (low ratings: family-systems theory would constitute a "not at all to minimal" enhancement to professional development; high ratings: family-systems theory would constitute a "moderately to extreme" enhancement to professional development). Assessment 3 served as a check for perceptual differences related to past and future experiences.

Perceived Relevancy Dependent Variables

Table 7 shows the relevancy variables I analyzed with 2 x 2 ANOVAs for the internal and external assessments. I combined conceptually related variables into summated scales, respectively, and explain their derivation in Section 2. To maintain the risk of a Type I error at 5% across sets of analyses, I made Bonferroni adjustments for each subset of variables in Table 7 to set new alpha levels. For each set, I divided the original alpha of .05 by the number of variables. For example, for the two variables in the family-systems theory subset; Bonferroni adjusted alpha = .05/2 = .025 (see Table 7). On an ANOVA summary in Tables 8–11, statistically significant findings are in ***bold italics*** and findings with p values above but close in value to alpha are labeled as trends.

Table 7. Perceived Relevancy of Family Systems Theory Dependent Variables

Perceived relevancy variable subsets	Bonferroni adjustment
Family Systems Theory	
Importance of a Theoretical Foundation with Stakeholders SS*	.025
Importance of FST Concepts and Techniques SS	.025
CACREP	
Importance of Familiarity with CACREP Standards	.0125
Familiarity with CACREP Standards	.0125
CACREP Specificity on Family Systems Theory Training	.0125
Adequacy of Addressing CACREP Standards SS	.0125
ASCA	
Familiarity with ASCA Standards	.017
ASCA Specificity on Family Systems Theory Training	.017
Adequacy of Addressing ASCA National Model SS	.017
Faculty and Graduate Preparation	
Adequacy of Preparing Graduates	.05
Personal Competency Teaching a Family Systems Course	.05

Note. SS = summated scales rather than sums of squares; *Importance of a Theoretical Foundation in Family Systems Theory when Interacting with Stakeholders Summated Scale; FST = family-systems theory.

Research Question 1—Assessment 1, Internal Assessment

This section presents results of the internal assessment of two factors—course status (yes, offer a stand-alone course; no course; "Course") and curriculum status (director/coordinator, faculty; "Coordinator").

Interaction Effect Hypotheses

H_0: There was no statistically significant interaction effect between Course and

Coordinator on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

H_1: There was a statistically significant interaction effect between Course and

Coordinator on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

Main Effect of Course Categories Hypotheses

H_0: There was no statistically significant main effect of Course on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

H_1: There was a statistically significant main effect of Course on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

Main Effect of School Counseling Program Coordinator Status Hypotheses

H_0: There was no statistically significant main effect of curriculum Coordinator on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

H_1: There was a statistically significant main effect of curriculum Coordinator on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

Perceptions About the Importance of Family Systems Theory When Interacting With Stakeholders

I found no significant interactions or main effects of Coordinator (see Table 8). However, a significant effect of Course emerged. Figure 10 shows that respondents from programs that offered a stand-alone family-systems theory course rated the importance of a theoretical foundation in family-systems theory when interacting with stakeholders significantly higher than did respondents from programs that did not offer a course, a finding that held for both curriculum coordinators and faculty. The main effect of Course was very strong, partial eta2 = .18.

Table 8. ANOVA Results of the Effects of Course and Coordinator on Perceived Relevance of Family Systems Theory on Theoretical Foundations and CACREP

Effect	F (*df, df*) = statistic, *p* value	Eta^2	Fig	*M (SD) n* COURSE no COORDINATOR no	*M (SD) n* Course yes Coordinator yes
Importance of a Theoretical Foundation with Stakeholders SS					
Interaction	F (1, 35) = 0.02, *ns*	-	-		
ME Course	***F (1, 35) = 7.46, p = .001***	***.18***	***10***	***3.46 (0.56) 6***	***4.45 (0.63) 33***
ME Coordinator	F (1, 35) = 0.07, *ns*	-	-	4.46 (0.58) 11	4.23 (0.75) 28
Importance of Family Systems Theory Concepts and Techniques SS					
Interaction	F (1, 35) = 0.20, *ns*	-	-		
ME Course	*F (1, 35) = 4.20, p = .004*	*.11*	*11*	*3.33 (0.88) 6*	*4.35 (0.69) 33*
ME Coordinator	F (1, 35) = 2.30, *ns*	-	-	4.59 (0.38) 11	4.03 (0.87) 28
Importance of Familiarity with CACREP Standards					
Interaction	F (1, 35) = 1.05, *ns*	-	-		
ME Course	F (1, 35) = 1.05, *ns*	-	-	4.50 (0.55) 6	4.88 (0.33) 33
ME Coordinator	*F (1, 35) = 3.46, p = .07*	*.09*	*12*	*5.00 (0.00) 11*	*4.75 (0.44) 28*
Respondent's Familiarity with CACREP Standards					
Interaction	F (3, 35) = 1.90, *ns*	-	-		
ME Course	*F (3, 35) = 3.64, p = .06*	-	-	*4.67 (0.52) 6*	*4.85 (0.36) 33*
ME Coordinator	*F (1, 35) = 5.66, p = .02*	*.14*	-	*4.64 (0.51) 11*	*4.89 (0.32) 28*
CACREP Specificity on Family Systems Theory Training					
Interaction	F (1, 34) = 0.20, *ns*	-	-		
ME Course	F (1, 34) = 0.45, *ns*	-	-	3.20 (0.84) 5	3.48 (1.06) 33
ME Coordinator	F (1, 34) = 0.01, *ns*	-	-	3.64 (0.40) 11	3.37 (1.08) 27
Adequacy of Addressing CACREP Standards SS					
Interaction	F (1, 33) = 0.27, *ns*	-	-		
ME Course	F (1, 33) = 0.25, *ns*	-	-	4.51 (0.27) 6	4.56 (0.40) 31
ME Coordinator	F (1, 33) = 0.08, *ns*	-	-	4.57 (0.40) 10	4.54 (0.38) 27

Note. Results in **bold italics** are statistically significant. Results in italics are trends. SS = Summated Scale; ME = main effect; ns = nonsignificant; decision: fail to reject the null; eta^2 = partial eta squared; SC = school counselors; *n* = number of respondents.
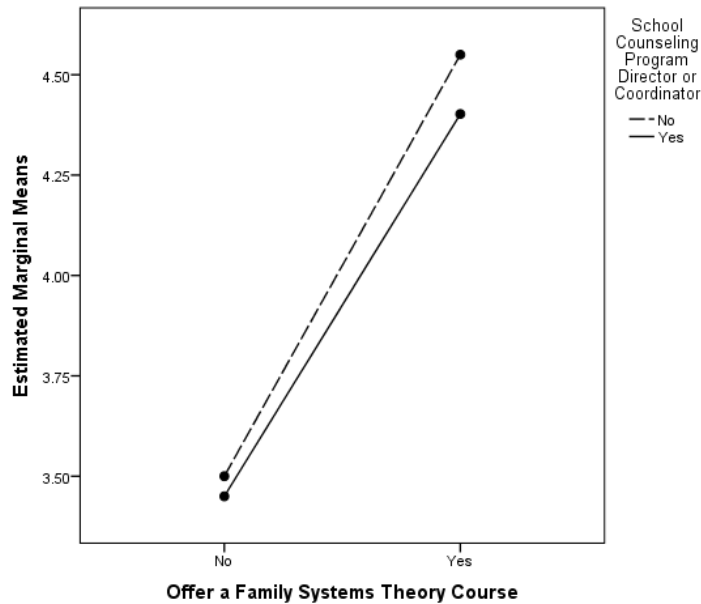
Figure 11. Estimated marginal means of the importance of family-systems-theory foundation with stakeholders summated scale.

Perceptions About the Importance of Family-Systems-Theory Concepts and Techniques

No significant interactions or main effect of Coordinator (see Table 8) emerged. However, a trend toward a significant effect of Course in the predicted direction of greater importance among coordinators of stand-alone courses did emerge. Figure 12 shows that respondents in programs that offer a stand-alone family-systems-theory course rated the theoretical importance of a conceptual and technical foundation in family-systems theory higher than did respondents in programs that do not offer a stand-alone family-systems-theory course.
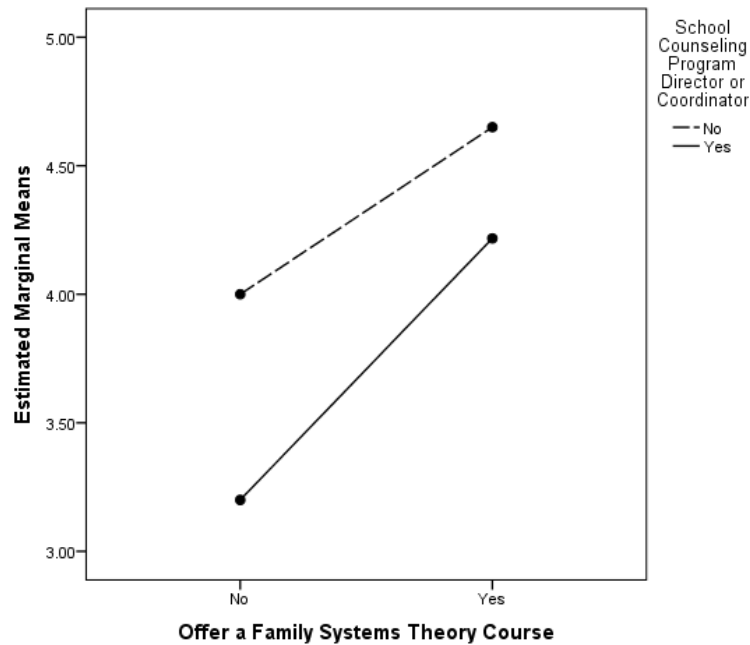
Figure 12. Estimated marginal means of the importance of family-systems-theory concepts and techniques summated scale.

Perceptions About the Importance of Familiarity With CACREP Standards

No significant interactions or main effect of Course (see Table 8) emerged. However, a trend toward a significant main effect of Coordinator (see Figure 13) did emerge. Respondents in programs that offer stand-alone family-systems-theory courses rated the importance of familiarity with CACREP school-counseling standards lower than did respondents in programs that do not offer a course, who rated importance uniformly as "highly important."
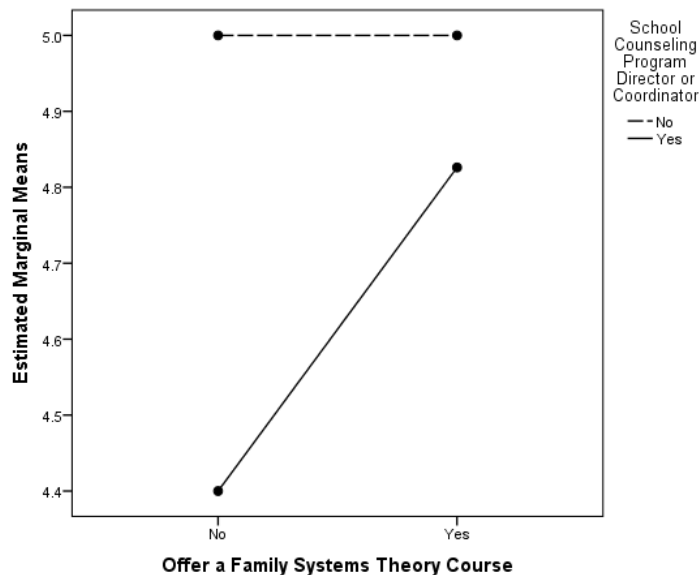
Figure 13. Estimated marginal means of importance of familiarity with CACREP school counseling standards.

Specificity of CACREP Standards on Family Systems Theory Training

With respect to ratings of the specificity of CACREP standards for training school-counseling students on family-systems-theory training, no significant interactions or main effects emerged (see Table 8). Respondents in programs with and without a stand-alone family-systems-theory course rated CACREP standards as "somewhat" specific on average (see Table 8).

Adequacy of Addressing CACREP Standards

No significant interactions or main effects emerged on ratings of the adequacy with which respondents' school-counseling programs addressed CACREP standards for training students on family-systems theory (see Table 8). Regardless of Course or Coordinator status, respondents rated CACREP standards between moderately and highly specific, on average (see Table 8).

Familiarity with ASCA Standards

No significant interactions or main effects emerged. On average, familiarity was rated as moderately important (see Table 9).

Table 9. ANOVA Results of the Effects of Course and Coordinator on Perceived Relevance of Family Systems Theory in American School Counselor Association Standards, Graduate Preparation and Personal Teaching Competency

| Effect	F (*df, df*) = statistic, *p* value	Eta^2	Fig	*M (SD) n* Course no Coordinator no	*M (SD) n* Course yes Coordinator yes
Familiarity with ASCA Standards					
Interaction	F (1, 35) = 0.70, *ns*	-	-		
ME Course	F (1, 35) = 2.03, *ns*	-	-	5.00 (0.00) 6	4.27 (1.31) 33
ME Coordinator	F (1, 35) = 0.70, *ns*	-	-	3.64 (1.75) 11	4.68 (0.82) 28
ASCA Specificity on Family Systems Theory Training					
Interaction	F (1, 35) = 0.05, *ns*	-	-		
ME Course	F (1, 35) = 0.23, *ns*	-	-	3.40 (0.89) 5	3.17 (1.34) 30
ME Coordinator	F (1, 35) = 0.54, *ns*	-	-	3.50 (1.27) 10	3.08 (1.29) 25
Adequacy of Addressing ASCA National Model SS					
Interaction	F (1, 33) = 0.01, *ns*	-	-		
ME Course	F (1, 33) = 0.05, *ns*	-	-	4.60 (0.34) 6	4.65 (0.32) 31
ME Coordinator	F (1, 33) = 0.01, *ns*	-	-	4.66 (0.33) 10	4.64 (0.32) 27
Adequacy of Preparing Graduates on Family Systems Theory					
Interaction	F (1, 35) = 2.54, *ns*	-	-		
ME Course	F (1, 35) = 0.01, *ns*	-	-	2.83 (0.75) 6	3.36 (0.82) 33
ME Coordinator	F (1, 35) = 1.96, *ns*	-	-	3.36 (0.67) 11	3.25 (0.89) 28
Personal Competency Teaching a Family Systems Course					
Interaction	F (1, 34) = 0.93, *ns*	-	-		
ME Course	F (1, 34) = 0.43, *ns*	-	-	3.83 (0.73) 6	3.91 (1.33) 32
ME Coordinator	F (1, 34) = 0.15, *ns*	-	-	4.09 (1.22) 11	3.81 (1.27) 27

Note. Results in **bold italics** are statistically significant. Results in italics are trends. SS = Summated Scale; ME = main Effect; ns = nonsignificant; decision: fail to reject the null; eta^2 = partial eta squared; SC = school counselors; *n* = number of respondents.

ASCA Specificity on Family Systems Theory Training

No significant interactions or main effects emerged. On average, specificity was rated as somewhat specific (see Table 9).

Adequacy of Addressing ASCA National Model SS

No significant interactions or main effects emerged. On average, adequacy was rated as moderate (see Table 9).

Adequacy of Preparing Graduates

No significant interactions or main effects emerged. On average, adequacy of preparing graduates was rated as somewhat (see Table 9).

Personal Competency Teaching a Family Systems Course

No significant interactions or main effects emerged. On average, personal competency of teaching family-systems-theory courses was rated as moderate (see Table 9).

Research Question 1—Assessment 2, External Assessment

Research Question 1 Assessment 2 also used two-way 2 x 2 ANOVAs, but this time assessed perceptions of relevancy with course status as above (yes, offer a stand-alone course; no course) by accrediting bodies (CACREP-accreditation and CACREP and NCATE-accreditation).

Interaction Effect Hypotheses

H_0: There was no statistically significant interaction effect between Course and

Accrediting Body on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

H_1: There was a statistically significant interaction effect between Course and

Accrediting Body on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

Main Effect of Course Categories Hypotheses

H_0: There was no statistically significant main effect of Course on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

H_1: There was a statistically significant main effect of Course on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

Main Effect of School Counseling Program Coordinator Status Hypotheses

H_0: There was no statistically significant main effect of Accrediting Body on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

H_1: There was a statistically significant main effect of Accrediting Body on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

ANOVA results appear in Table 10. Note that all of the programs without a stand-alone family-systems-theory course were accredited by CACREP and NCATE (none were accredited solely by CACREP) in the database. Consequently, this section only reflects main effects of either Course or Accrediting Body, both, or neither; no interaction effects emerged between Course and Accrediting Body.

Importance of a Theoretical Foundation with Stakeholders Summated Scale

Significant main effects emerged for Course and Accrediting Body on the importance of a foundation in family-systems theory when interacting with stakeholders (see Table 10 and Figure 14). For the main effect of Course, respondents from programs that offered a stand-alone course rated importance significantly higher than did respondents from programs without a course. For Accrediting Body, respondents with programs that were accredited by CACREP and NCATE rated importance lower that did respondents with programs that were accredited only by CACREP.

68

Table 10. ANOVA Results of the Main Effects of Course and Accrediting Body on Relevance of Family Systems Theory on Theoretical Foundations and CACREP

Effect	F (*df, df*) = statistic, *p* value	Eta^2	Fig	*M (SD) n* Course no CACREP	*M (SD) n* Course yes CACREP+ NCATE
Importance of a Theoretical Foundation with Stakeholders SS					
ME Course	*F (1, 35) = 8.22, p = .007*	*.19*	*13*	*3.45 (0.62) 5*	*4.45 (0.63) 33*
ME Body	*F (1, 35) = 6.90, p = .013*	*.17*	*13*	*4.85 (0.34) 10*	*4.12 (0.71) 28*
Importance of Family Systems Theory Concepts and Techniques SS					
ME Course	*F (1, 35) = 8.35, p = .007*	*.19*	*14*	*3.20 (0.91) 5*	*4.35 (0.69) 33*
ME Body	*F (1, 35) = 6.56, p = .015*	*.16*	*14*	*4.80 (0.35) 10*	*3.98 (0.82) 28*
Importance of Familiarity with CACREP Standards					
ME Course	*F (1, 35) = 10.46, p = .003*	*.23*	*15*	*4.40 (0.55) 5*	*4.88 (0.33) 33*
ME Body	F (1, 35) = 3.77, *ns*	-	-	4.70 (0.48) 10	4.86 (0.36) 28
Respondent's Familiarity with CACREP Standards					
ME Course	F (1, 35) = 0.14, *ns*	-	-	4.80 (0.45) 5	4.85 (0.36) 33
ME Body	F (1, 35) = 0.24, *ns*	-	-	4.80 (0.42) 10	4.86 (0.36) 28
CACREP Specificity on Family Systems Theory Training					
ME Course	F (1, 34) = 0.30, *ns*	-	-	3.25 (0.96) 4	3.48 (1.06) 33
ME Body	F (1, 34) = 0.43, *ns*	-	-	3.30 (1.25) 10	3.52 (0.98) 28
Adequacy of Addressing CACREP Standards SS					
ME Course	F (1, 33) = 0.05, *ns*	-	-	4.54 (0.29) 5	4.55 (0.40) 31
ME Body	F (1, 33) = 0.49, *ns*	-	-	4.48 (0.55) 9	4.58 (0.31) 27

Note. Results in **bold italics** are statistically significant. Results in italics are trends. SS = Summated Scale; ME = main effect; ns = nonsignificant; decision: fail to reject the null; eta^2 = partial eta squared. SC = school counselors; *n* = number of respondents
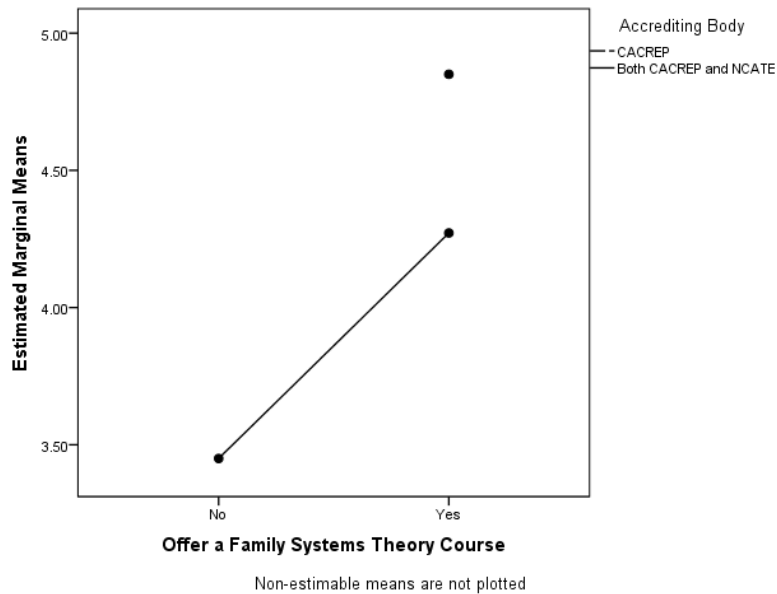
Figure 14. Estimated marginal means of importance of Family Systems Theory foundation with stakeholders summated scale.

Importance of Family-Systems-Theory Concepts and Techniques Summated Scale

Significant main effects emerged for both Course and Accrediting Body on ratings of the importance of a foundation in the concepts and techniques of family-systems theory when training school counselors (see Table 10 and Figure 15). For the main effect of Course, respondents from programs that offered a stand-alone course rated the importance of knowledge of family-systems-theory concepts and techniques significantly higher than did respondents from programs without a course. For Accrediting Body, respondents with programs that were accredited by CACREP and NCATE rated the importance lower than did respondents with programs that were accredited only by CACREP.

70
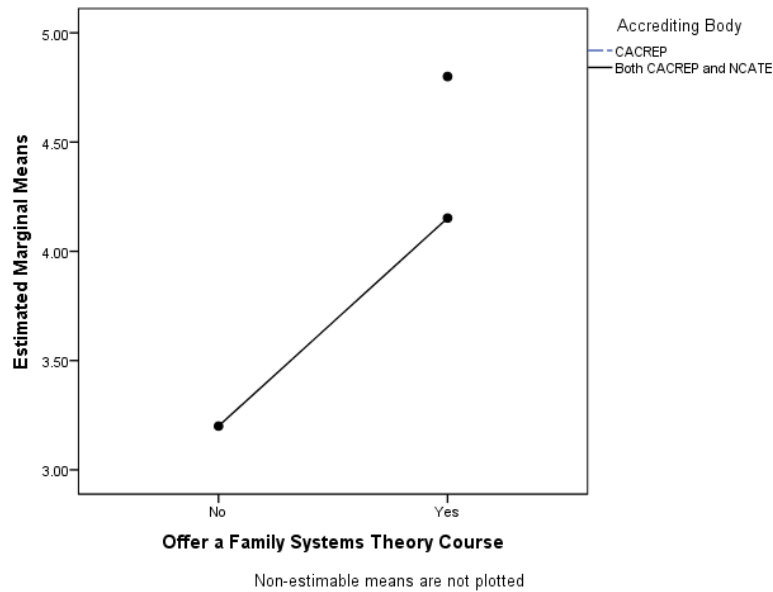
Figure 15. Estimated marginal means of importance of Family Systems Theory concepts and techniques summated scale.

Importance of Familiarity with CACREP Standards

Table 10 and Figure 16 show the significant main effect of Course on ratings of the importance of familiarity with CACREP standards for teaching family-systems theory to school-counseling students. Respondents with programs that offered a stand-alone family-systems-theory course rated this importance variable significantly higher ($M = 4.88$) than did respondents from programs without a stand-alone course ($M = 4.40$, see Figure 16).
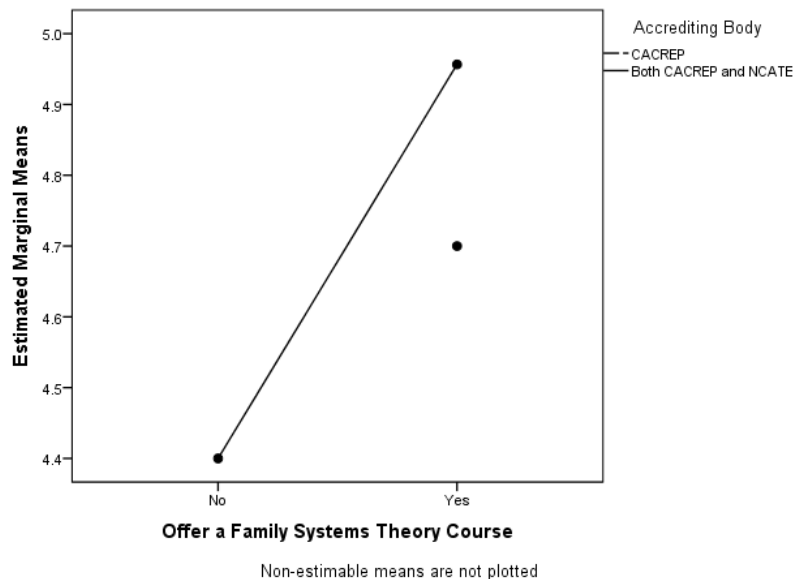
Figure 16. Estimated marginal means of importance of familiarity with CACREP school counseling standards.

Respondent's Familiarity With CACREP Standards

No significant main effects emerged. On average, respondents reported that they were highly familiar with the standards (see Table 10).

CACREP Specificity on Family-Systems-Theory Training

No significant main effects emerged on CACREP standards specificity (see Table 10). Respondents gave an average rating of somewhat specific.

Adequacy of Addressing CACREP Standards Summated Scale

No significant main effects emerged on the reported adequacy with which programs addressed CACREP standards for family-systems theory (see Table 10). On average, respondent ratings were between moderately and highly adequate.

Familiarity With ASCA standards

Table 11 shows that no significant main effects emerged. Ratings of familiarity with ASCA standards averaged moderate familiarity.

Table 11. ANOVA Results of the Main Effects of Course and Accrediting Body on Perceived Relevance of Family-Systems Theory in American School Counselor Association Standards, Graduate Preparation and Personal Teaching Competency (SS = Summated Scales)*

| Effect	F (df, df) = statistic p value	Eta^2	Fig	M (SD) n Course no CACREP	M (SD) n Course yes CACREP + NCATE
Familiarity with ASCA Standards					
ME Course	F (1, 35) = 0.76, *ns*	-	-	5.00 (0.00) 5	4.27 (1.31) 33
ME Body	F (1, 35) = 2.19, *ns*	-	-	3.80 (1.55) 10	4.57 (1.07) 28
ASCA Specificity on Family Systems Theory Training					
ME Course	F (1, 31) = 0.01, *ns*	-	-	3.25 (0.96) 4	3.17 (1.34) 30
ME Body	F (1, 31) = 0.01, *ns*	-	-	3.13 (1.46) 8	3.19 (1.27) 26
Adequacy of Addressing ASCA National Model SS					
ME Course	F (1, 33) = 0.10, *ns*	-	-	4.60 (0.38) 5	4.65 (0.32) 31
ME Body	F (1, 33) = 0.01, *ns*	-	-	4.66 (0.38) 9	4.64 (0.31) 27
Adequacy of Preparing Graduates on Family Systems Theory					
ME Course	F (1, 35) = 2.36, *ns*	-	-	2.60 (0.55) 5	3.36 (0.82) 31
ME Body	***F (1, 35) = 4.76, p = .003***	***.12***	***16***	***3.80 (1.03) 9***	***3.07 (0.66) 27***
Personal Competency Teaching a Family Systems Course					
ME Course	F (1, 34) = 0.01, *ns*	-	-	4.00 (0.71) 5	3.91 (1.33) 32
ME Body	F (1, 34) = 0.84, *ns*	-	-	3.60 (1.65) 10	4.04 (1.09) 27

Note. Results in **bold italics** are statistically significant. Results in italics are trends. SS = Summated Scale; ME = main effect; *ns* = nonsignificant; decision: fail to reject the null; eta^2 = partial eta squared; SC = school counselors; *n* = number of respondents.

ASCA Specificity on Family Systems Theory Training

Table 11 shows that no significant main effects emerged. Ratings of the specificity of ASCA standards averaged moderate specificity.

Adequacy of Addressing ASCA National Model SS

Table 11 shows that no significant main effects emerged. Ratings of the adequacy of addressing ASCA standards averaged between minimally and somewhat.

Adequacy of Preparing Graduates on Family Systems Theory

Table 11 and Figure 17 show a significant main effect of accrediting body on ratings of

the adequacy of respondents' school-counseling programs in training graduates. Figure 16 shows

that the average adequacy rating for programs that were only accredited by CACREP ($M = 3.80$)

was significantly higher than the average adequacy rating for programs that were accredited by

both CACREP and NCATE ($M = 3.07$).
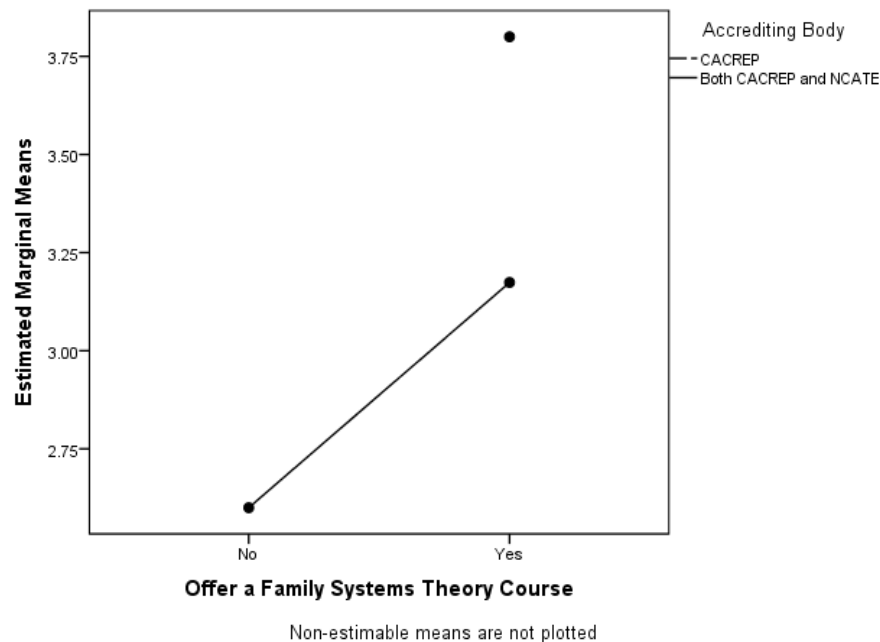
Figure 17. Estimated marginal means of adequacy of preparing graduates in family-systems theory.

Personal Competency Teaching a Family-Systems Course

Table 11 shows that no significant main effects emerged. Ratings of respondents'

personal competency in teaching a family-systems-theory course ranged between somewhat and

moderately competent.

Research Question 1—Assessment 3, Past and Future Assessment

Research Question 1 Assessment 3 also used two-way 2 x 2 ANOVAs to assess perceptions of relevancy. Factors for this assessment were the dichotomous variable formal training in family-systems theory (yes, had formal training in family-systems theory; no, did not have formal training in family-systems theory) by the dichotomous variable ratings of professional development enhanced by including training in family-systems theory (low: not at all to somewhat enhancing; high: moderately to highly enhancing).

Interaction Effect Hypotheses

H_0: There was no statistically significant interaction effect between Training and Professional Development on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

H_1: There was a statistically significant interaction effect between Training and Professional Development on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

Main Effect of Course Categories Hypotheses

H_0: There was no statistically significant main effect of Training on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

H_1: There was a statistically significant main effect of Training on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

Main Effect of School-Counseling-Program Coordinator Status Hypotheses

H_0: There was no statistically significant main effect of Professional Development on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

H_1: There was a statistically significant main effect of Professional Development on perceived relevance of family-systems theory.

ANOVA results are shown in Table 12.

75

Table 12. ANOVA Results of the Main Effects of Formal Training and Professional Development on Relevance of Family-Systems Theory on Theoretical Foundations and Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs

Effect	F (*df, df*) = statistic, *p* value	Eta^2	Fig	*M (SD) n* Train no PD no	*M (SD) n* Train yes PD yes
Importance of a Theoretical Foundation with Stakeholders SS					
Interaction	F (1, 35) = 3.55, *ns*				
ME Training	***F (1, 35) = 7.37, p = .01***	***.17***		***3.94 (0.76) 8***	***4.39 (0.67) 31***
ME PD	***F (1, 35) = 6.26, p = .02***	***.15***		***4.05 (0.98) 10***	***4.38 (0.59) 29***
Importance of Family Systems Theory Concepts and Techniques SS					
Interaction	F (1, 35) = 1.27, *ns*				
ME Training	F (1, 35) = 1.99, *ns*	-	-	4.00 (0.60) 8	4.24 (0.85) 31
ME PD	F (1, 35) = 1.85, *ns*	-	-	4.05 (1.07) 10	4.24 (0.70) 29
Respondent's Familiarity with CACREP Standards					
Interaction	F (1, 35) = 1.18, *ns*				
ME Training	F (1, 35) = 1.18, *ns*	-	-	4.50 (0.53) 8	4.90 (0.30) 31
ME PD	F (1, 35) = 3.13, *ns*	-	-	5.99 (0.00) 10	4.76 (0.43) 29
Importance of Familiarity with CACREP Standards					
Interaction	F (1, 35) = 0.22, *ns*				
ME Training	F (1, 35) = 0.00, *ns*	-	-	4.75 (0.46) 8	4.84 (0.37) 31
ME PD	F (1, 35) = 0.61, *ns*	-	-	4.90 (0.32) 10	4.79 (0.41) 29
CACREP Specificity on Family Systems Theory Training					
Interaction	F (1, 34) = 1.93, *ns*				
ME Training	F (1, 34) = 2.67, *ns*	-	-	3.13 (0.89) 8	3.53 (1.07) 30
ME PD	F (1, 34) = 0.63, *ns*	-	-	3.60 (1.17) 10	3.39 (0.99) 28
Adequacy of Addressing CACREP Standards SS					
Interaction	F (1, 33) = 0.87, *ns*				
ME Training	F (1, 33) = 0.08, *ns*	-	-	4.39 (0.45) 8	4.59 (0.35) 29
ME PD	F (1, 33) = 0.11, *ns*	-	-	4.51 (0.37) 8	4.56 (0.38) 29

Note. *Training = Formal training in family-systems theory (yes, no). PD = professional development enhanced by family-systems theory (low = family-systems theory would enhance professional development not at all to somewhat; high = family-systems theory would enhance professional development moderately to extremely). Results in **bold italics** are statistically significant. Results in italics are trends. SS = Summated Scale; ME = main effect; ns = nonsignificant; decision: fail to reject the null; eta^2 = partial eta squared; SC = school counselors; *n* = number of respondents.

Importance of a Theoretical Foundation with Stakeholders Summated Scale

Insufficient evidence emerged to reject the null hypothesis about an interaction effect (see Table 12). However, the evidence was sufficient to reject the null hypotheses about both main effects. Figure 18 shows that respondents with formal training rated the importance of a theoretical foundation in family-systems theory when addressing stakeholders significantly higher than did respondents without formal training. Figure 18 also shows that those who thought family-systems theory would enhance their professional development rated importance higher than did those who thought family-systems theory would be not at all to somewhat enhancing.
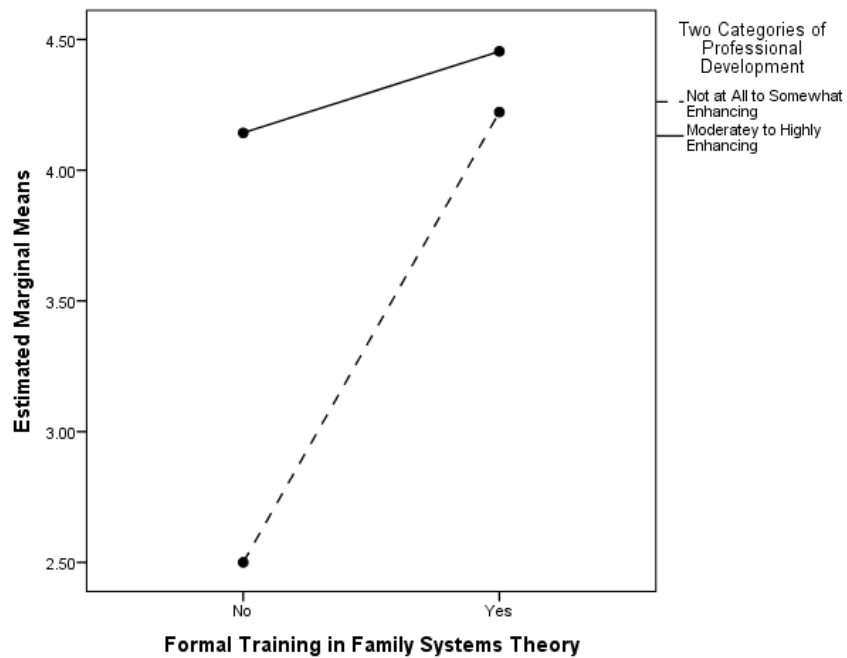
Figure 18. Line graph of significant main effects of training and professional development on the importance of a theoretical foundation when interacting with stakeholders.

Perceptions About the Importance of Family-Systems-Theory Concepts and Techniques Summated Scale

Table 12 shows that no significant interactions or main effects emerged. Respondent ratings of the importance of knowledge of family-systems-theory concepts and techniques averaged "of moderate importance."

Respondent's Familiarity of CACREP Standards

Table 12 shows that no significant interactions or main effects emerged. Regardless of past training or views of family-systems theory as an enhancement to professional development, respondents rated their own familiarity with CACREP standards as "extremely high" on average.

Importance of Familiarity with CACREP Standards

Table 12 shows that no significant interactions or main effects emerged. Regardless of past training or views of family-systems theory as an enhancement to professional development, respondents' average rating of the importance of familiarity with CACREP standards was "highly important."

CACREP Specificity on Family-Systems-Theory Training

Table 12 shows that no significant interactions or main effects emerged. Regardless of past training or views of family-systems theory as an enhancement to professional development, respondents rated CACREP standards as somewhat specific.

Adequacy of Addressing CACREP Standards Summated Scale

Table 12 shows that no significant interactions or main effects emerged. Regardless of past training or views of family-systems theory as an enhancement to professional development, respondents rated the adequacy of addressing CACREP standards as moderate.

Familiarity with ASCA Standards

Table 13 shows that no significant interactions or main effects emerged. Regardless of

past training or views of family-systems theory as an enhancement to professional development,

respondents rated their familiarity moderate.

Personal Competency Teaching a Family Systems Theory Course

Table 13 shows that there was not a significant interaction effect or main effect for

professional development. However, training had a strong and significant effect on respondents'

reported competency for teaching family-systems theory. Figure 19 shows that respondents who

had formal training felt much more competent teaching family-systems theory than did

respondents who had not had formal training.
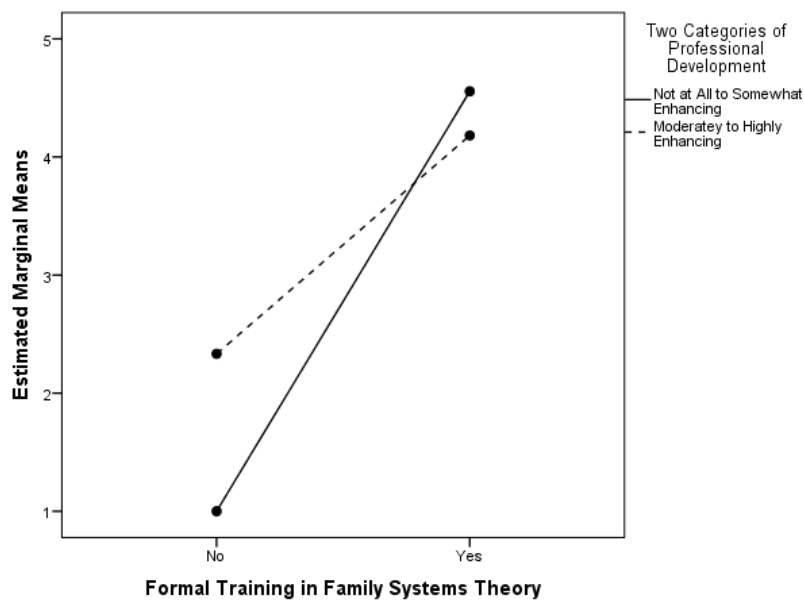
Figure 19. Estimated marginal means of personal competency for teaching a family-systems course.

Table 13. ANOVA Results of the Main Effects of Formal Training and Professional Development on American School Counselor Association Standards, Graduate Preparation and Personal Teaching Competency

Effect	F (*df, df*) = statistic, *p* value	Eta^2	Fig	*M (SD) n* Train no PD low	*M (SD) n* Train yes PD high
Familiarity with ASCA Standards					
Interaction	F (1, 35) = 0.30, *ns*				
ME Training	F (1, 35) = 0.14, *ns*	-	-	4.38 (1.41) 8	4.39 (1.20) 31
ME PD	F (1, 35) = 0.19, *ns*	-	-	4.40 (1.27) 10	4.38 (1.24) 29
ASCA Specificity on Family Systems Theory Training					
Interaction	F (1, 31) = 3.27, *ns*				
ME Training	F (1, 31) = 3.19, *ns*	-	-	2.86 (1.21) 7	3.29 (1.30) 28
ME PD	F (1, 31) = 1.34, *ns*	-	-	3.33 (1.80) 8	3.15 (1.08) 26
Adequacy of Addressing ASCA National Model SS					
Interaction	F (1, 33) = 0.05, *ns*				
ME Training	F (1, 33) = 0.20, *ns*	-	-	4.67 (0.24) 8	4.64 (0.34) 29
ME PD	F (1, 33) = 1.01, *ns*	-	-	4.77 (0.23) 8	4.61 (0.33) 29
Adequacy of Preparing Graduates on Family Systems Theory					
Interaction	F (1, 25) = 0.01, ns				
ME Training	F (1, 35) = 1.17, *ns*	-	-	2.88 (0.84) 8	3.39 (0.80) 31
ME PD	F (1, 35) = 0.16, ns	-	-	3.50 (0.53) 10	3.21 (0.90) 29
Personal Competency Teaching a Family Systems Course					
Interaction	F (1, 34) = 2.57, *ns*	-	-		
ME Training	***F (1, 34) = 26.02, p = .00***	***.43***	***18***	***2.14 (1.22) 7***	***4.27 (0.86) 31***
ME PD	F (1, 34) = 0.82, *ns*	-	-	4.20 (1.40) 10	3.79 (1.20) 28

Note. Training = Formal training in family-systems theory (yes, no); PD = professional development enhanced by family-systems theory (low = family-systems theory would enhance professional development not at all to somewhat; high = family-systems theory would enhance professional development moderately to extremely). Results in **bold italics** are statistically significant. Results in italics are trends. SS = Summated Scale; ME = main effect; ns = nonsignificant; decision: fail to reject the null; eta^2 = partial eta squared; SC = school counselors; *n* = number of respondents.

Section 5: Research Question 2

Are there statistically significant differences in the inclusion of family-systems theory as part of the university program curricula by the professional demographic characteristics of master's-level school-counseling faculty?

This research question was also addressed with two sets of analyses. The first refers only to curriculum coordinators and corresponds to the internal assessment of perception variables in Section 4. The second analysis compares demographic variables by family-systems-theory course status (yes, have a stand-alone course, no, do not) across the entire database.

Comparison of the Demographics of Curriculum Coordinators with School-Counseling Programs that Do and Do Not Offer a Stand-Alone Family-Systems-Theory Course

This section presents the personal and professional demographic characteristics of curriculum coordinators who offered stand-alone family-systems-theory courses ($n = 23$) compared to the demographic characteristics of curriculum coordinators who did not offer stand-alone family-systems-theory courses ($n = 5$). Columns in Tables 14 and 15 reflect course status (No stand-alone family-systems-theory course, Yes, have a stand-alone family-systems-theory course). Rows list demographic variables that, due to the small sample size, I collapsed into dichotomous variables (Levels of the Variable, Tables 14 and 15) and examined with Fisher's Exact test for small samples. For personal demographics, I identified five variables and used the Bonferroni adjustment to set a new alpha level by dividing .05 by 5, adjusted alpha = .01. For professional demographics, this yielded four variables; I used the Bonferroni adjustment to set a new alpha level by dividing .05 by 4, adjusted alpha = .0125.

Only one personal demographic variable on Table 14 may have differentiated coordinators with and without family-systems-theory courses, which was years of experience

working in K–12 settings. A statistical trend suggested that more coordinators of stand-alone

family-systems-theory courses had less experience than coordinators who did not have a course

than would be expected by chance, Fisher's *p* = .06.

Table 14. Distribution of *n* = 28 Curriculum Coordinators With and Without Stand-alone Family
Systems Theory Courses by Personal Demographic Variables

| Variables | Levels of the variable | Offer a stand-alone family-systems-theory course | | |
		No	Yes	Total
Experience in School Systems (Yrs)	*10 Years or Less*	*1*	*16*	*17*
	More than 10 Years	*4*	*7*	*11*
Experience working in K–12	No Experience	1	1	2
	Yes, Experience	4	22	26
Highest Educational Level	Doctoral	4	20	24
	Postdoc or Specialist	1	3	4
Experience working in K–12	No Experience	1	1	2
	Yes, Experience	4	22	26
Years of Age	20–49 Years Old	3	10	13
	50–79 Years Old	2	13	15

Note. n = 23 for all programs offering a stand-alone family-systems-theory course; *n* = 5 for all programs not
offering a stand-alone family-systems-theory course; A variable that showed a statistical trend is shown in italics.

Table 15. Distribution of *n* = 28 Curriculum Coordinators With and Without Stand-alone Family
Systems Theory Courses by Professional Demographic Variables

| Variables | Levels of the variable | Offer a stand-alone family-systems-theory course | | |
		No	Yes	Total
Formal Training in Family Systems Theory	No Formal Training	2	4	6
	Yes, Formal Training	3	19	22
Professional Qualifications	School Professional	4	16	20
	Counseling Professional	1	7	8
School Counseling Program Size	Smaller Programs	2	9	11
	Larger Programs	3	12	15
Professorial Status	Assistant/Associate Professor	5	14	19
	Full Professor	0	9	9

Note. n = 23 for all programs offering a stand-alone family-systems-theory course except School-Counseling-
Program Size, *n* = 21; *n* = 5 for all programs not offering a stand-alone family-systems-theory course.

Demographic Comparison by Family-Systems-Theory Course Status

      This section shows comparisons of demographic variables for the entire database. Due to the small sample size, I collapsed demographic variables into dichotomous variables (Levels of the Variable, Tables 16 and 17). I examined potential associations between dichotomous demographic variables and family-systems-theory course status (yes, no) with chi-square tests of independence with the Yates correction for 2 x 2 tables. Tables 16 and 17 show the results in order of magnitude of the chi-square statistics. For personal demographics, I identified five variables and used the Bonferroni adjustment to set a new alpha level by dividing .05 by 5, adjusted alpha = .01 (see Table 16). For professional demographics, I identified 7 variables and set the Bonferroni adjustment to a new alpha level by dividing .05 by 7, adjusted alpha = .007 (see Table 17). Significant associations and statistical trends appear with bar charts below.

Table 16. Chi-square Tests of Independence Results Between Offering a Family-Systems-Theory Course (Yes, No) by Personal Demographic Variables

Variable	Levels of the variable	X^2 (*df, df*) = statistic, *p* value
Years in Educational System	*10 or Less Years* *More than 10 Years*	X^2 *(1, 39) = 3.94, p = .04*
Highest Education Level	Doctoral Post-doctoral or Specialist	X^2 (1, 39) = 1.14, *ns*
Age in Years	20-49 Years 50-79 Years	X^2 (1, 39) = 0.91, *ns*
Experience with Children	Yes No	X^2 (1, 39) = 0.32, *ns*
Gender	Male Female	X^2 (1, 39) = 0.02, *ns*

Note. ns = nonsignificant.

Table 17. Chi-square Tests of Independence Results Between Offering a Family-Systems-Theory Course (Yes, No) by Professional Demographic Variables

Variable	Levels of the Variable	X^2 (*df, df*) = statistic, *p* value
Family System Theorists	***1 or 2 Theorists*** ***3 or more Theorists***	X^2 ***(1, 39) = 7.59, p = .006***
Formal Training in FST	*Yes* *No*	X^2 *(1, 39) = 3.78, p = .05*
Professorial Status	Associate/Assistant Professor Full Professor	X^2 (1, 39) = 2.79, p = .09
Accrediting Body	CACREP CACREP + NCATE	X^2 (1, 38) = 2.06, *ns*
Role	Teacher Counselor	X^2 (1, 34) = 1.52, *ns*
Professional Qualifications	School Professional Counseling Professional	X^2 (1, 36) = 1.22, *ns*
Program Size	Smaller Programs Larger Programs	X^2 (1, 36) = 0.12, *ns*

Note. FST = family-systems theory; ns = nonsignificant; Statistically significant variables are shown in bold italics; Statistical trends are italicized.

Years in the Educational System

A trend emerged toward an association between Course and Years of Experience in the Educational System (adjusted residuals ± 2.00, see Table 16 and Figure 20). Of the programs that offered a family-systems-theory course, more respondents had 10 or fewer years of experience and fewer respondents had more than 10 years of experience than expected by chance. Of the programs that did not offer a family-systems-theory course, more respondents had more than 10 years of experience and fewer respondents had 10 or fewer years of experience.
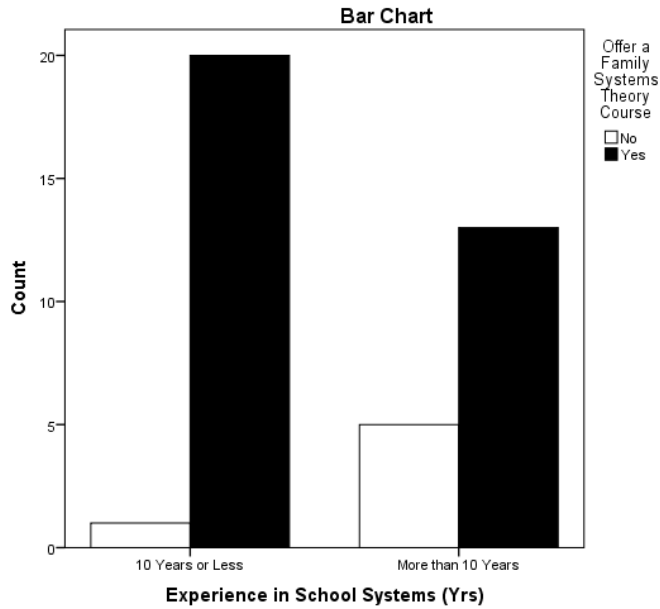
Figure 20. Bar chart of family-systems-theory course offerings by years of experience in the educational system.

Family-System Theorists

A significant association emerged between Course and Theorists (adjusted residuals ± 2.8, see Table 17). Figure 21 shows that more of the programs that offered a stand-alone family-systems-theory course included three or more major theorists and fewer did not include three or more major theorists than expected by chance. The pattern was the opposite for programs that did not offer a family-systems-theory course: more included just one or two major theorists in other courses and fewer included three or more theorists than expected by chance.
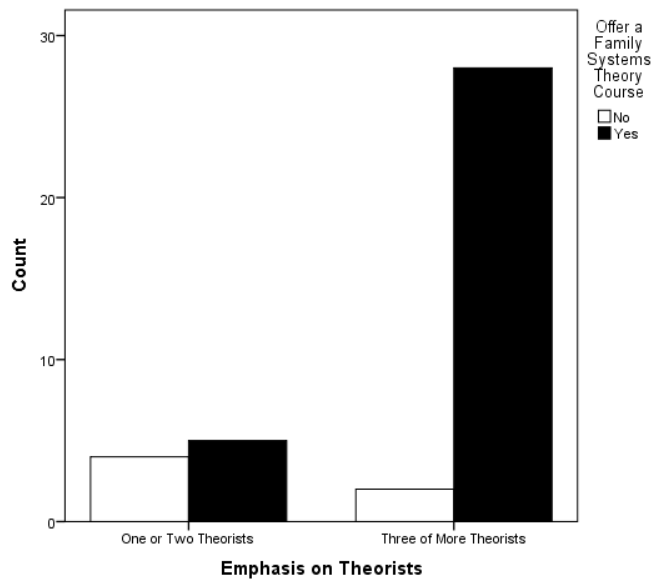
Figure 21. Bar chart of family-systems-theory course offering by major theorists.

Formal Training in Family-Systems Theory

I identified a trend toward an association between Course and Formal Training (adjusted residuals ± 1.90, Table 17). Figure 22 shows that, of the programs that offered a family-systems-theory course, more respondents had formal training and fewer respondents did not have formal training than expected by chance. Of the programs that did not offer a family-systems-theory course, fewer had formal training and more did not have formal training than expected by chance.
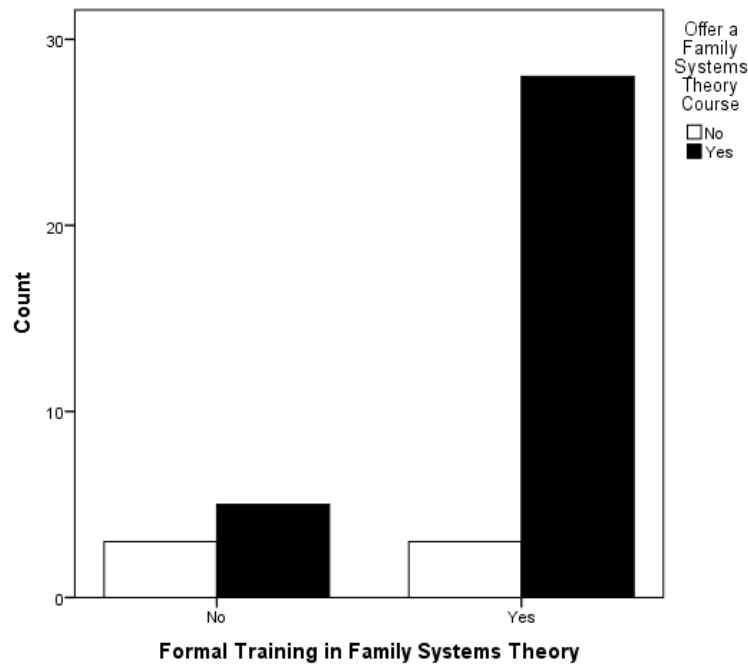
Figure 22. Bar chart of family-systems-theory course offering by formal family-systems-theory training.

Professorial Status

Of note was the implied, though not statistically supported, association between Course and Professorial Status (adjusted residuals ± 1.70, see Table 17). Shown on Figure 22, more respondents in programs that offered a family-systems-theory course were associate or assistant professors and fewer were full professors than expected by chance. Of the programs that did not offer a family-systems-theory course, faculty were all full professors.
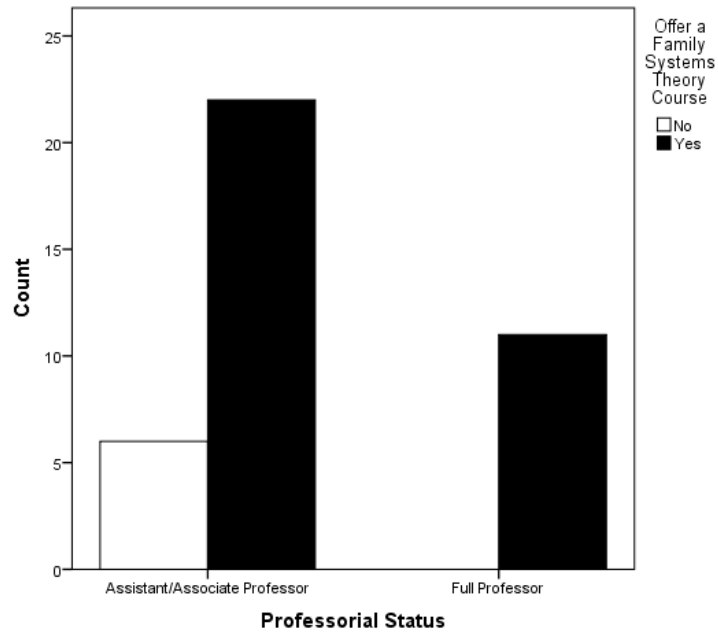
Figure 23. Bar chart of family-systems-theory course offerings by professorial status.

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION

Summary of Results

Five factors influenced perceptions of the relevancy of family-systems theory for school counselors representing CACREP-accredited school counseling programs surveyed in the current study. The first and most influential factor was the status of a family-systems course in the school-counseling program curriculum. Respondents from school-counseling programs with stand-alone family-systems-theory courses rated family-systems theory as more relevant than did respondents from programs that did not have a stand-alone course. A second factor was the respondents' role in their school-counseling program as curriculum coordinator or faculty. Respondent roles produced equivocal findings. Coordinators reported more personal familiarity with CACREP standards than did faculty. However, faculty rated the importance of familiarity with CACREP standards higher than did coordinators. A third factor was whether the program had a single or double accreditation. Programs with a single CACREP accreditation perceived family-systems theory as more relevant than did those with double accreditation from CACREP and NCATE. A fourth influential factor was formal training in family-systems theory: Respondents with training rated higher the importance of theoretical knowledge in family-systems theory when addressing stakeholders than did respondents without training, and rated higher their personal competency in teaching family-systems theory courses as well. The fifth and final factor was attitude about family-systems theory as an enhancement to professional development. Those who rated it as an enhancement rated the importance of a theoretical

89

knowledge in family-systems theory as more important than did respondents who did not think family-systems theory would enhance professional development.

Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

Respondents whose opinions are summarized below are highly educated and highly experienced women. The modal respondent was a Caucasian woman residing on the East Coast of the United States in her 50s holding a doctorate and working as a curriculum or director coordinator as a tenured or tenure-track associate or assistant professor. Professional experience in the school system included work in middle and high schools, with a proportion of respondents experienced in elementary schools as well as middle and high schools. Although a slight majority was primarily experienced in urban and suburban educational settings, as a group respondents had broad experience in urban, suburban, and rural educational settings. The majority of respondents were counselors rather than teachers per se. All respondents were from CACREP-accredited school-counseling programs. However, the majority of the programs they represented were also accredited by NCATE. A roughly equal number of respondents work in small programs with less than 60 new-student enrollments triennially as those in larger programs for 60 or more students matriculating triennially.

Before discussing specific finding about perceptions of relevancy, background in the status of family-systems theory and the school-counseling programs represented by the respondents may help the reader. CACREP standards require school-counseling curricula to include family-systems theory, but leave the specific interpretation of how to include family systems to program directors. My perusal of 478 school-counseling programs revealed that less than half were CACREP-accredited. Moreover, only a third of the CACREP-accredited

programs offered family systems as part of their curriculum. This finding strongly suggests the need for a CACREP directive that gives more explicit guidance on how to include family-systems theory in school-counseling programs. It was surprising to discover that only one in three school-counseling programs include family systems as part of the curriculum. But this could be related to the perceptions of respondents in the current study that CACREP standards are only somewhat to moderately specific on the topic of family-systems theory.

Despite the small sample size, the current study provides a concentrated look at the status of family-systems theory in school-counseling curricula because it sampled half of the abovementioned school-counseling programs that include family systems as an integral rather than tangential part of their curriculum. That is, 73% of the respondents were school-counseling-program curriculum coordinators or directors, and five of their programs had a stand–alone family-systems course for every one program that did not have a stand–alone course. Although this represents a possible self-selection bias, I gleaned positive and negative aspects to the self-selection. The positive aspect of this potential self-selection bias was that this study tapped perspectives from school-counseling programs that fully embrace family-systems theory. The negative aspect of the potential self–selection bias was that planned comparisons of school-counseling programs with and without family-systems-theory courses (to understand how they differ) was somewhat compromised by a small sample that was strongly skewed toward school-counseling programs that include family-systems theory as part of the curriculum.

Family-Systems-Theory Course Status

With that caveat in mind, a number of intriguing findings pointed toward improving the presence of family-systems theory in school-counseling-program curricula. For example, most programs did not require school-counseling students to obtain specific training in family-systems

theory because they offered their stand-alone family-systems-theory course as an elective. In contrast, only an approximate quarter offered it as a core course. This finding highlights one avenue for improving the presence, and the perceived relevance, of family-systems-theory courses in school-counseling programs: family-systems-theory courses should be offered as core rather than as elective courses.

Overview of Ratings

The central question of this study was how school counselors perceive the relevance of family-systems theory in their training programs. The instrument I developed to collect relevancy data showed strong internal consistency, yielding Cronbach's alphas between .78 and .93 (see Tables 1, 2, and 3). The instrument measured relevancy in several ways.

Overall descriptive statistics in Tables 1, 2, and 3 show that respondents rated the importance of knowledge in family-systems concepts as moderately to highly important, whereas they rated the importance of a theoretical foundation in techniques as lower, simply as moderate. This is somewhat counterintuitive because respondents were trained counselors rather than "mere" teachers; one would have expected them to rate the knowledge of family-systems-theory techniques as equally important to knowledge of theoretical concepts.

However, respondents provided intuitively satisfying answers to questions about the relevancy of knowledge in family-systems theory when interacting with stakeholders. Specifically, their ratings varied by stakeholder type. That is, school counselors in the current sample rated knowledge in family-systems theory as moderately to highly important when interacting with parents or guardians. But they rated it as only moderately important when addressing school personnel and the community at large.

Respondents generally believed that CACREP standards were adequately addressed in their school-counseling programs. The aspects of CACREP standards they rated most highly included school counselors as agents of change and training students in coping strategies. The CACREP standard they rated as least adequately addressed in their school-counseling programs was incorporating family-systems theory during interventions. This is a troubling finding that parallels the aforementioned finding that respondents perceived knowledge of techniques as less relevant than knowledge of theoretical concepts.

Somewhat unexpectedly, respondents from CACREP-accredited school-counseling programs rated the adequacy of addressing ASCA standards as highly adequate. Specifically, individual counseling was rated as highly adequate and group counseling was rated nearly as high. In contrast to the finding that importance of family-systems theory varied by type of stakeholder, respondents rated the adequacy with which their school-counseling programs met ASCA standards for interaction with stakeholders nearly as high as they rated individual and group counseling. A visual comparison suggests that ASCA standards, which are more indirect on the topic of family systems than are CACREP standards, were more adequately addressed than were CACREP standards. They also reported that ASCA and CACREP standards were more adequately addressed than were basic concepts and techniques of family-systems theory when interacting with stakeholders. One of many suggestions was that family systems may tend to get diluted in the larger challenges of meeting the mandate of two or more different accrediting and oversight bodies, an argument that is elaborated below.

Stand-alone family-systems courses were high-quality courses. Core courses included at least three of the major family-systems theorists (see Table 6). This outcome suggests that extant family-systems-theory courses addressed the spirit of CACREP standards more than adequately.

I recommend that more school-counseling programs include high-quality stand-alone family-systems-theory courses in their curricula.

The central question guiding this research was about respondents' perceptions of the relevancy of family-systems theory in school-counseling programs. School counseling is a complex profession and deals with complex student issues. Family-systems theory is fundamental to school counseling, but is also complex in its own right. Therefore, relevancy was examined from internal, external, and past and future perspectives to determine their potential influence.

Internal Influences

The first perspective was through the eyes of those addressing school-counseling programs on a daily basis: curriculum directors and faculty. This *in vivo* internal assessment compared perceptions of the relevancy of family-systems theory among individuals who were directly responsible for the quality of school-counseling students' education and training. This internal assessment was conducted against the backdrop of the most important distinction: whether the school-counseling program had a stand-alone family-systems course, regardless of whether it was offered as a core course or as elective course.

Perceptions of relevancy differed significantly as a function of respondents whose school-counseling programs did and did not offer family-systems courses. Ultimately, respondents whose school-counseling programs offered family-systems-theory courses thought that family-systems theory was more relevant than did respondents from programs without family-systems courses. Respondents from programs with stand-alone courses thought a theoretical foundation in family-systems-theory concepts, techniques, and as a basis when addressing stakeholders such as parents and guardians, was more important than did respondents

94

whose programs did not offer a family-systems course. Those from programs with a family-systems-theory course also rated the importance of a familiarity with CACREP standards as more important than did respondents from programs without a family-systems course; the former reported more personal familiarity with CACREP standards than did the latter as well.

Thus, the presence of stand-alone family-systems courses and higher ratings of the relevance of family-systems theory were significantly associated. The current study was unable to identify the direction of this association, but it seems tenable that the association is usefully interpreted metaphorically as the chicken-and-the-egg question of which came first. It is certainly possible that the presence of the course engendered the belief among school counselors that it was important to include family-systems theory in curricula. It is also certainly possible that school counselors who understand that family-systems theory is a crucial aspect of training school-counselor students helped promote the development of their program's course in family-systems theory. This question would be a viable subject for future research.

Differences in perceptions of the relevancy of family-systems theory also arose as a function of the role of the respondent as curriculum director versus faculty member. Program coordinators and faculty work at the forefront of education and training school-counseling students. But curriculum coordinators obviously have more direct influence on the curriculum than do faculty. Granted, the influence of role was more indirect than it was for stand-alone courses because differences emerged as statistical trends rather than significant differences per se. Intriguingly, however, the influence of respondent role was equivocal. That is, one difference went in the expected direction. The other difference went in the unexpected direction. In the expected direction, curriculum coordinators reported greater personal familiarity with CACREP standards than did faculty, as one would expect of curriculum coordinators. However,

counterintuitively, faculty rated the importance of familiarity with CACREP standards as higher than curriculum coordinators did themselves.

External Influences

The second perspective on perceptions of relevancy was a function of the status of program accreditation. This perspective served as an *in vitro* external assessment to discern if a measurable effect exists of the more remote influence of accrediting bodies on the perceived relevancy of family-systems theory. This external assessment was also conducted against the backdrop of the most important distinction, which was whether the school-counseling program had a stand-alone family-systems course, regardless of whether it was offered as a core course or as elective course.

Perceptions of the relevancy of family-systems theory differed in association with the more remote influence of external accrediting bodies. In this study, all respondents were from CACREP-accredited school-counseling programs. However, the majority of the school-counseling programs were also accredited by NCATE. A comparison of programs with either one or two accrediting bodies showed that those from CACREP-only programs perceived family-systems theory as significantly more important than did CACREP and NCATE-accredited school-counseling programs. This outcome suggests that one artifact of dual or multiple accreditation bodies is that it is difficult, metaphorically, to serve two masters. In the current study, one interpretation is that family-systems theory may be diluted and thus deemphasized in the challenges of meeting the requirements of multiple accrediting bodies.

Perhaps more damningly, CACREP-only school-counseling programs rated the adequacy of preparing their student school counselors as significantly higher than did the school-counseling programs with the dual accreditation of CACREP and NCATE. Again, this finding

argues that there may be some aspect of dual accreditation that has the effect of diluting the importance of family-systems theory in the eyes of curriculum directors beholden to uphold both CACREP and NCATE standards.

Past and Future Influences

The third perspective on relevancy of family systems was a function of past and future influences. A proxy for past influences was whether respondents had formal training in family systems. A proxy for future influence was whether respondents saw family-systems theory as a viable form of professional development.

Results revealed a small influence of past and future influences. Respondents with formal training in family-systems theory rated the importance of theoretical knowledge in family-systems theory when addressing stakeholders higher than did respondents without training. They also rated their personal competency in teaching family-systems-theory courses higher as well. In perceptions that the addition of training in family-systems theory would or would not make a substantial enhancement to professional development, respondents who rated the addition as an enhancement also rated a theoretical knowledge in family-systems theory as more important than did respondents who did not think family-systems theory would enhance professional development.

Demographic Distinctions

The above discussion shows that perceptions about the relevancy of family systems clearly varied as a function of family-systems-theory course status, respondent role (internal assessment), accreditation (external assessment), past training, and future professional-development goals. The next question was whether there were clear demographic distinctions as

well. In the current study, demographics were personal (e.g., age) and professional (e.g., years of experience).

Somewhat surprisingly, almost no distinction arose in demographic characteristics between curriculum directors with and without stand-alone family-systems-theory courses. The only possible distinction was that those with stand-alone courses had 10 or fewer years of professional experience as school counselors. In contrast, those without a course tended to have more experience. This finding is counterintuitive; one would have expected that greater experience in the school system would serve to increase school counselors' appreciation of family-systems theory in a school-counseling curriculum. Another interpretation of this possible distinction is that coordinators with courses had obtained their graduate training relatively recently and had returned to the workforce in a new capacity, which could account for their reduced experiential level. This corresponds with the finding that most respondents were in their 50s. One might speculate that this recency of graduate training included greater exposure and closer adherence to CACREP standards for family-systems theory. This interpretation is further supported by the finding that more of these coordinators offered high-quality family-systems-theory courses and had received formal training or training in family-systems theory.

Participant Feedback

At the end of the survey, I asked respondents to render comments. Those who provided feedback further illustrated the need for school-counseling-program coordinators and faculty members to reevaluate their curriculum and the relevance of family-systems theory and technique coursework in preparing graduates to meet the needs of students and ensure the best possible outcome personally and academically.

It saddens me to say that our university does not offer family systems theories as part of our curriculum. It is a much needed course, especially with the high rate of student depression and suicides. Knowledge of family systems can be pivotal in a school counselors' ability to serve the student in the best way possible.

Interesting survey topic. Made me think about getting a refresher in family systems theory and counseling

It is absolutely crucial for school counselors to have training in family-systems theory. First, this training will make them more effective consultants with caregivers. Second, systemic dynamics are crucial to understand when working in a school, especially when consulting with teachers and in the likelihood of unhelpful triangles between family, student, and school staff.

Thank you for your study. School counselors need an extensive understanding of family systems to truly assist students with their personal/social issues.

In over 35 years of working in public education at the K–12, Special Education, and higher education levels, it is clear to me that the family and school systems are the most important factors in child development, preventative mental health and community resilience. Unfortunately, our program is one of the only school counseling preparation programs that has a primary emphasis on systems intervention with families and school staff. This has been a critical shortcoming in most school counselor preparation programs and has resulted in the school counselor being mostly considered as a "throw-away" position during funding shortages. We cannot be relevant if we do not include a strong focus on family factors and inclusion in the counseling process for our school children.

Parenting skills and school-family-community partnership models and parent info in how to empower academic, career, college access and personal/social skills are more important than family systems theory per se for school counselors.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are intrinsic elements that have the potential to influence the researcher's ability to obtain accurate results but over which the researcher has little or no control (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). I experienced no problems implementing the study as planned. Conclusions were restricted to reasonable evidence of associations between internal, external, and past and future influences on school counselors' perceptions of the relevance of family-systems theory in the training and education of school-counseling students. Although the internal consistency of the data was good, external validity of the study was weak due to the small sample size, and findings should not be generalized without future validation by larger studies.

Limitations to the current research included respondent willingness to participate in the study, which may account for the unexpected small sample size, especially given that 210 CACREP-accredited programs exist across the United States. Limitations in the current research also included external verification of participant status as a school counselor, their current employment in a university school-counseling program, and their actual knowledge of the status of family-systems theory in the curriculum.

Any study based on respondent self-selection (volunteering to participate) can be potentially limited by selection bias (Gliner & Morgan, 2000), which may have existed in the current study, because the majority of respondents were curriculum coordinators of school-counseling programs that included stand-alone family-systems-theory courses. However, nothing

in the invitation to participate in the study appears to have led to this differential proportion in the respondent pool; one way to test that factor is to replicate the study.

This study generated self-report survey data. Self-report measures are somewhat artificial because they do not directly measure respondents' behavior in the environment where the behavior typically occurs (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). Self-report measures are also commonly influenced by respondents' awareness that they are being "studied," which can produce self-conscious artificial responses. Self-report measures are also commonly influenced by respondents' potential manifestation of social-desirability bias. This bias is respondents' natural desires to appear socially acceptable to the researcher, despite assurances of the confidentiality of their responses (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). The social-desirability bias may have been a potent limitation in the current study because so many respondents were directly responsible for the curriculum, and would seem unlikely to present themselves and their work in any but the best possible light (again, despite the fact that the researcher was not directly aware of their identity). A possible limitation is that respondents may have wished to conceal something. As school counselors, respondents may have acted on a need to conceal what they believed to be their own shortcomings or, more likely, to err on the side of presenting a professional response.

An untested assumption of this research was that school counselors were candid. The accuracy of their responses was a potential limitation along with their willingness to communicate their pedagogical behavior honestly. I assumed counselors neither viewed their ratings of survey statements as admissions of pedagogical inadequacies nor augmented reports of the true reality of the program.

Suggestions for Future Research

An important form of future research would be to replicate the current study with a larger sample. The small number of respondents who were from school-counseling programs that did not offer a family-systems-theory course compromised this study's ability to draw firmer conclusions about the extent to which perceptions of the relevance of family-systems theory to school-counseling programs do in fact differ by internal, external, past, and future influences.

Future researchers can conduct the study with a larger sample to tease apart the potential influence of offering family-systems-theory courses as core versus elective courses on the quality of student training. Along these lines, another project could consider the quality of training from the student standpoint, testing student graduates for knowledge and looking for differences between students who were trained with curricula that included a stand-alone family-systems-theory course and students who were not so trained.

Another area for consideration of research is the perception of practicing school-counseling professionals on the relevance of future school counselors being trained in family-systems theory and technique in a stand-alone course. In conjunction with a study of this nature, inquiry into the potential benefit of developmental training in family systems through the eyes of practicing school counselors might shed light on the training of university faculty in family-systems theory and technique to better educate students in a school-counseling program. This information could offer a broader perspective to CACREP universities that currently do not offer family-systems theory as a stand-alone course.

Implications for the Field

This study provided relevant information to CACREP-accredited master's-level school-counseling programs regarding the interpretation of CACREP standards in the stand-alone

course offering of family-systems theory as part of their core or elective course curriculum. It also rendered information about the perception of faculty regarding their competency in teaching a course in family-systems theory. In conjunction with this perception, the study revealed that training has a major impact on relevancy of a stand-alone course in family-systems theory as part of the school-counseling program. This study illustrated that relevancy in this area can be improved through developmental training.

Findings from this study suggest that developmental training for faculty in master's-level school-counseling programs could be key to conforming to CACREP accrediting standards in curricula. I propose that ASCA may also benefit from this study in their efforts to promote a systems perspective through training school-counseling professionals through online seminars or conference workshops that offer continuing-education units. For those universities that are short staffed and underfunded, training school-counseling faculty in family systems can be achieved through developmental workshops offered by professional organizations such as ASCA.

This study furnished important data and relevant information that CACREP may find of interest and helpful in clarifying accrediting standards for master's-level school-counseling programs. Along that vein, CACREP program evaluators may also benefit from this information when going into the field and inspecting CACREP-accredited master's-level school-counseling program sites. Closer examination of course content may reveal gaps in the education of school-counseling students in family systems.

Lack of response from those universities that are CACREP accredited and do not offer family-systems theory as a stand-alone course may suggest confusion as to the interpretation of CACREP standards regarding family-systems theory as part of the curricula and whether a stand-alone course is indicated.

Final Conclusions

The results of this study suggest that the accrediting body, CACREP, consider further clarification of their standards with regard to the inclusion of family-systems theory as part of the curriculum in master's-level school-counseling programs. Also, those school-counseling programs that serve two masters, CACREP and NCATE, might have contradictory guidelines and standards that require further investigation and clarification by the individual accrediting bodies.

The information gained from this study has opened the door for CACREP-accredited master's-level school-counseling programs to examine and reevaluate their curriculum according to CACREP standards on family-systems theory as a stand-alone course and whether it meets the standards of their accrediting body, CACREP.

The existence of a stand-alone family-systems-theory course emerged as the most important distinction among school-counselor respondents in the current study. Encouraging more school-counseling programs to develop stand-alone courses, based on exemplars from programs that include all five major theorists, would require greater communication among the members of the professional school-counseling community. Involvement of ASCA has the potential to promote a greater understanding of family-systems theory and technique as integral agents of systems change.
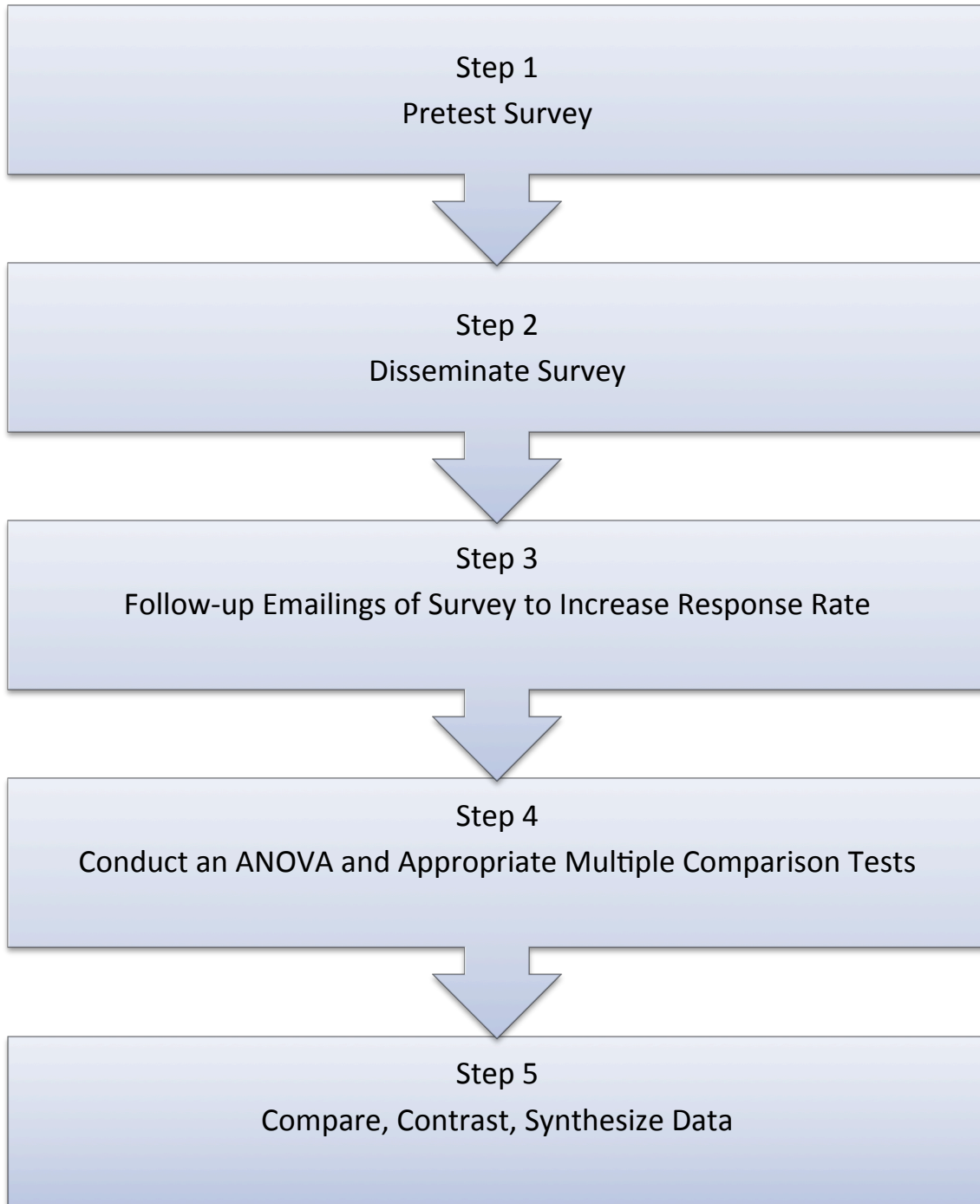
Figure 24. Steps to the analysis of data.
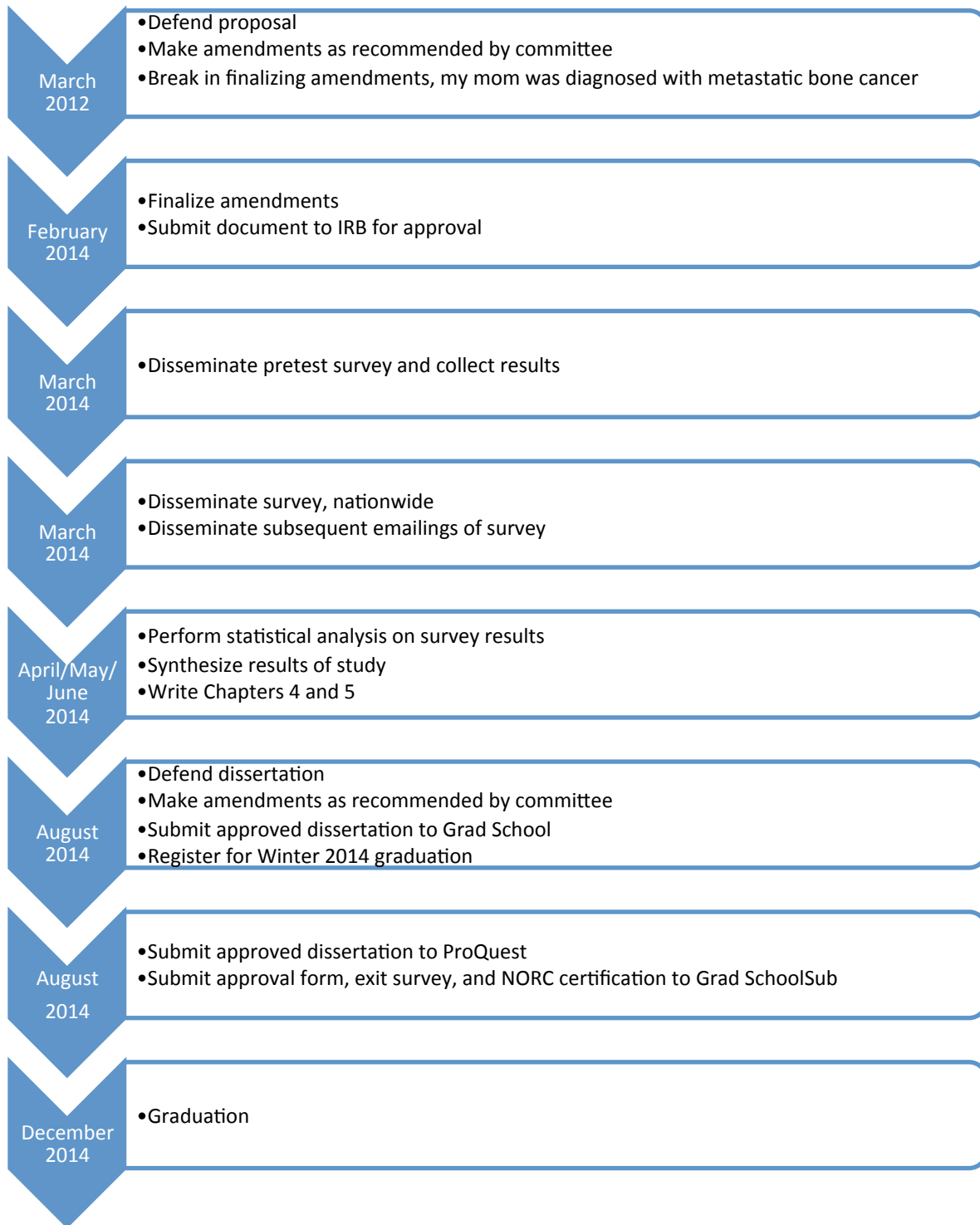
Figure 25. Timeline for the dissertation process.

REFERENCES

Adams, J. R., Benshoff, J. M., & Harrington, S. Y. (2007). An examination of referrals to the
school counselor by race, gender, and family structure. *Professional School Counseling,
10,* 389–398. Retrieved from http://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/j_benshoff_2007.pdf

Amatea, E. S., & Clark, M. (2005). Changing schools, changing counselors: A qualitative study
of school administrators' conceptions of the school counselor role. *Professional School
Counseling, 9,* 16–27.

American Counseling Association. (2005). *Code of ethics.* Alexandria, VA: Author.

American School Counselor Association. (2004). *National standards for students.* Retrieved
from http://ascamodel.timberlakepublishing.com/files/NationalStandards.pdfcv

American School Counselor Association. (2009a). *The role of the professional school counselor.*
Retrieved from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp
?contentid=240

American School Counselor Association. (2009b). *School counselor competencies.* Retrieved
from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=418

American School Counselor Association. (2009c). *School counseling degree programs.*
Retrieved from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?=513

American School Counselor Association. (2012). *ASCA national model: A framework for school
counseling programs* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.

American School Counselor Association. (2013). *School counseling degree programs.* Retrieved from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors-members/career-roles/school-counselor-degree-programs

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In T. Husen & T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (Vol. 3, 2nd ed., pp.1643–1647). Oxford, England: Elsevier Sciences.

Bryan, J., & Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2007). An examination of school counselor involvement in school-family-community partnerships. *Professional School Counseling, 10,* 441–454.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011). *Occupational outlook handbook, 2010* (11th ed.). Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos067.htm

Collins, D., & Tomm, K. (2009). Karl Tomm: His changing views on family therapy over 35 years. *Family Journal, 17,* 106–117. doi:10.1177/1066480709332632

Cook, C., Heath, F., & Thompson, R. L. (2000). A meta-analysis of response rates in web or internet based surveys. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 6,* 821–836. doi:10.1177/00131640021970934

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2009). *2009 standards.* Retrieved from http://www.cacrep.org/doc/2009%20Standards%20with %20cover.pdf

Dahir, C. A., Burnham, J. J., & Stone, C. (2009). Listen to the voices: School counselors and comprehensive school counseling programs. *Professional School Counseling, 12,* 182–192. Retrieved from http://www.ncschoolcounselor.org

Davis, K. M. (2001). Structural-strategic family counseling: A case study in elementary school counseling. *Professional School Counseling, 4,* 180–186.

Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects* (4th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Dillman, D. A. (2000). *Mail and Internet surveys: The tailored design method* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Edwards, O. W., Mumford, V. E., & Serra-Roldan, R. (2007). A positive youth development model for students considered at-risk. *School Psychology International, 28,* 29–45. doi:10 .1177/0143034307075673

Eppler, C., & Weir, S. (2009). Family assessment in k–12 settings: Understanding family systems to provide effective, collaborative services. *Psychology in the Schools, 46,* 501– 514. doi:10.1002/pits.20393

Fish, M. C., & Jain, S. (1988). Using systems theory in school assessment and intervention: A structural model for school psychologists. *Professional School Psychology, 4,* 291–300. doi:10.1037/h0090569

Galassi, J. P., & Akos, P. (2004). Developmental advocacy: Twenty-first century school counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 82,* 146–157. doi:10.1002/j.1556 -6678.2004.tb00296.x

Gerrard, B. (2008). School-based family counseling: Overview, trends, and recommendations for future research. *International Journal for School-Based Family Counseling, 1*(1), 1–30. Retrieved from https://schoolbasedfamilycounseling.com

Gliner, J. A., & Morgan, G. A. (2000). *Research methods in applied settings: An integrated approach to design and analysis.* New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Guerin, P. J., Jr., & Chabot, D. R. (1992). Development of family systems theory. In D. K.

    Freedheim (Ed.), *History of psychotherapy: A century of change* (pp. 181–225).

    Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. (2001). Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs: A

    rich history and a bright future. *Professional School Counseling, 4,* 246–262. Retrieved

    from http://fcett.nu.edu/sites/default/files/file_file\/gysbers_history.pdf

Hair, J. F., Jr., Black, W. C., Babin B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis.*

    Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Hayes, R. L., & Paisley, P. O. (2002). Transforming school counselor preparation programs.

    Theory into Practice, 41, 169–176. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip4103_5

Holcomb-Mccoy, C. (2004). Using the family autobiography in school counselor preparation: An

    introduction to a systemic perspective. *Family Journal, 12,* 21–25. doi:10.1177

    /1066480703258615

Horn, M. (1989). *Before it's too late: The child guidance movement in the United States 1922–*

    1945. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

House, R. M., & Sears, S. J. (2002). Preparing school counselors to be leaders and advocates: A

    critical need in the new millennium. *Theory into Practice, 41,* 154–162. doi:10.1207

    /s15430421tip4103_3

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm

    whose time has come. *Educational Researcher, 33*(7), 14–26. doi:10.3102

    /0013189X033007014

Koller, J. R., & Bertel, J. M. (2006). Responding to today's mental health needs of children, families and schools: Revisiting the preservice training and preparation of school-based personnel. *Education and Treatment of Children, 29,* 197–217.

Kourkoutas, E. E., & Xavier, M. R. (2010). Counseling children at risk in a resilient contextual perspective: A paradigmatic shift of school psychologists' role in inclusive education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 5,* 1210–1219. doi:10.1016201007263

Lambie, G. W., & Rokutani, L. J. (2002). A systems approach to substance abuse identification and intervention for school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 5,* 353–359. Retrieved from http://www.thefreelibrary.com/A+systems+approach+to+substance +abuse+identification+and+intervention...-a088579045

Lambie, G. W., & Williamson, L. L. (2004). The challenge to change from guidance counseling to school counseling: A historical proposition. *Professional School Counseling, 8,* 124– 131. Retrieved from http://faculty.weber.edu/eamsel/Classes/Practicum/DaVinci %20Practicum/Papers/Lambie%20&%20Williamson%20_2003_.pdf

Lawson, H. A. (2004). The logic of collaboration in education and the human services. *Journal of Interprofessional Care, 18,* 225–237. doi:10.1080/13561820410001731278

Lockhart, E., & Keys, S. (1998). The mental health counseling role of school counselors. *Professional School Counselor, 1,* 3–6.

Mangelsdorf, S. C., & Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J. (2007). Emergent family systems. *Infant Behavior and Development, 30,* 60–62. doi:10.1016/j.infbeh.2006.11.006

Mullis, F., & Edwards, D. (2001). Consulting with parents: Applying family systems concepts and techniques. *Professional School Counseling, 5,* 116–131.

National Center for Transforming School Counseling. (2003). *The new vision for school counseling.* Retrieved from http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/Scope%20of %20the%20Work_1.pdf

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2002). *Professional standards for the accreditation of schools, college departments of education.* Retrieved from https://www.ncate.org/2000/unit_stnds_2002.pdf

Nelson, J. A. (2006). For parents only: A strategic family therapy approach in school counseling. *Family Journal, 14,* 180–183. doi:10.1177/1066480705285557

Paisley, P. O., & Hayes, R. L. (2003). School counseling in the academic domain: Transformations in preparation and practice. *Professional School Counseling, 6,* 198–205. doi:10.2307/42732429

Paylo, M. J. (2011). Preparing school counseling students to aid families: Integrating a family systems perspective. *Family Journal, 19,* 140–146. doi:10.1177/1066480710397130

Perusse, R., & Goodnough, G. E. (2005). Elementary and secondary school counselors' perceptions of graduate preparation programs: A national study. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 45,* 109–118. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2005.tb00134.x

Perusse, R., Goodnough, G. E., Donegan, J., & Jones, C. (2004). Perceptions of school counselors and school principals about emerging trends in school counseling. *Professional School Counselor, 47,* 152–161.

Perusse, R., Goodnough, G. E., & Noel, C. J. (2001). A national survey of school counselor preparation programs: Screening methods, faculty experiences, curricular content, and fieldwork requirements. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 40,* 252–262. doi:10.1002 /j.1556-6978.2001.tb01258.x

Peytchev, A., Couper, M. P., McCabe, S. E., & Crawford, S. D. (2006). Web survey design.

Public Opinion Quarterly, 4, 596–607. doi:10.1093/poq/nfl028

Walsh, M. R., Barrett, J. G., & DePaul, J. (2007). Day-to-day activities of school counselors:

Alignment with new directions in the field and the ASCA national model. *Professional*

School Counseling, 10, 370–378.

APPENDIX A:

COMPETENCIES TAKEN FROM ASCA, CACREP, NCATE

List of Competencies taken from ASCA standards

According to Walsh, Barrett, and DePaul (2007), family support and outreach constitutes 10% of the school counselors' collaborative practice as stated in the ASCA National Model. The following was taken from ASCA standards list of competencies:

Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education and training, and the world of work. Facilitates Pre-K-12 students' growth and development within the framework of the American School Counselors Association's National Standards (academic development, career development, and personal/social development)

Possesses the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to plan, organize, implement and evaluate a comprehensive, developmental, results-based school counseling program that aligns with the ASCA National Model: foundation, delivery, management, and accountability.

Serve as advocates and educational leaders in the K-12 setting

Effectively and appropriately counsel K-12 students

Understands the nature of academic, career and personal/social counseling in schools and the similarities and differences among school counseling and other types of counseling, such as mental health, marriage and family, and substance abuse counseling, within a continuum of care

Understands counseling theories and techniques that work in the school setting

Understands counseling theories and techniques that work in different settings

Demonstrates the knowledge, role and function of the professional school counselor and

how it relates to school reform, dropout prevention and college access programming

Practices ethical standards and principles of the school counseling profession in accordance with the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors

Collaboration with stakeholders such as parents and guardians, teachers, administrators and community leaders to create learning environments that promote educational equity and success for every student

114

Family-centered collaboration: viewing family systems as partners sharing accountability for results and whose engagement influences and determines the well-being of children, parents and grandparents as well as the future of the family.

Describes, defines and identifies the qualities of an effective school counseling program

Creates a plan to challenge the non-counseling tasks that are assigned to school counselors

Involves appropriate school and community professionals as well as the family in a crisis situation

List of Competencies taken from CACREP 2009 standards

According to CACREP (2009) standards, students who are preparing to work as school counselors will demonstrate the professional knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of all K-12 students. In addition to the common core curricular experiences outlined in Section II.G, "Common core curricular experiences and demonstrated knowledge in each of the eight common core curricular areas are required of all students in the program" (CACREP, 2009), programs must provide evidence that student learning has occurred in the following domains.

Section II.G.

A minimum of 48 semester hours or 72 quarter credit hours required of all students

Demonstrates mastery and application of the content knowledge in each of the following eight core areas of counseling:

G. 1 Professional Identity and Orientation – studies that provide an understanding of all aspects of professional functioning.

G.2 Social and Cultural Diversity – studies that provide an understanding of the cultural context of relationships, issues, and trends in a multicultural society.

G.2.d. individual, couple, family, group, and community strategies for working and advocating for diverse populations, including multicultural competencies.

G.3 Human Growth and Development – studies that provide an understanding of the nature and needs of persons at all developmental levels and in multicultural contexts.

G.3.a. theories of individual and family development and transitions across the lifespan.

G.3.f. human behavior, including an understanding of developmental crises, disability, psychopathology, and situational and environmental factors that affect both normal and abnormal behavior.

G.4 Career Development – studies that provide an understanding of career development and related life factors.

G.5 Helping Relationships – studies that provide an understanding of the counseling process in a multicultural society.

G.5.e. a systems perspective that provides an understanding of family and other systems theories and major models of family and related interventions.

G.6 Group Work – studies that provide both theoretical and experiential understandings of group purpose, development, dynamics, theories, methods, skills, and other group approaches in a multicultural society.

G.7 Assessment – studies that provide an understanding of individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation in a multicultural society.

G.8 Research and Program Evaluation – studies that provide an understanding of research methods, statistical analysis, needs assessment, and program evaluation.

FOUNDATIONS

A.   Knowledge

1. Knows history, philosophy, and trends in school counseling and educational systems

2. Understands ethical and legal considerations specifically related to the practice of school counseling.

3. Knows roles, functions, settings, and professional identity of the school counselor in relation to the roles of other professional and support personnel in the school

4. Knows professional organizations, preparation standards, and credentials that are relevant to the practice of school counseling

5. Understands current models of school counseling programs (e.g., American School Counselor Association [ASCA] National Model) and their integral relationship to the total educational program

6. Understands the effects of (a) atypical growth and development, (b) health and wellness, (c) language, (d) ability level, (e) multicultural issues, and (f) factors of resiliency on student learning and development

7. Understands the operation of the school emergency management plan and the roles and responsibilities of the school counselor during crises, disasters, and other trauma-causing events

B. Skills and Practice

1. Demonstrates the ability to apply and adhere to ethical and legal standards in school counseling

2. Demonstrates the ability to articulate, model, and advocate for an appropriate school counselor identity and program

COUNSELING, PREVENTION, AND INTERVENTION

C. Knowledge

1. Knows the theories and processes of effective counseling and wellness programs for individual students and groups of students.

2. Knows how to design, implement, manage, and evaluate programs to enhance the academic, career, and personal/social development of students

3. Knows strategies for helping students identify strengths and cope with environmental and developmental problems

4. Knows how to design, implement, manage, and evaluate transition programs, including school-to-work, postsecondary planning, and college admissions counseling

5. Understands group dynamics—including counseling, psycho-educational, task, and peer helping groups—and the facilitation of teams to enable students to overcome barriers and impediments to learning

6. Understands the potential impact of crises, emergencies, and disasters on students, educators, and schools, and knows the skills needed for crisis intervention

D.   Skills and Practices

1. Demonstrates self-awareness, sensitivity to others, and the skills needed to relate to diverse individuals, groups, and classrooms

2. Provides individual and group counseling and classroom guidance to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of students

3. Designs and implements prevention and intervention plans related to the effects of (a) typical growth and development, (b) health and wellness, (c) language, (d) ability level, (e) multicultural issues, and (f) factors of resiliency on student learning and development

4. Demonstrates the ability to use procedures for assessing and managing suicide risk Demonstrates the ability to recognize his or her limitations as a school counselor and to seek supervision or refer clients when appropriate

DIVERSITY AND ADVOCACY

E.   Knowledge

1. Understands the cultural, ethical, economic, legal, and political issues surrounding diversity, equity, and excellence in terms of student learning

2. Identifies community, environmental, and institutional opportunities that enhance—as well as barriers that impede—the academic, career, and personal/social development of students

3. Understands the ways in which educational policies, programs, and practices can be developed, adapted, and modified to be culturally congruent with the needs of students and their families

4. Understands multicultural counseling issues, as well as the impact of ability levels, stereotyping, family, socioeconomic status, gender, and sexual identity, and their effects on student achievement

F. Skills and Practices

1. Demonstrates multicultural competencies in relation to diversity, equity, and opportunity in student learning and development

2. Advocates for the learning and academic experiences necessary to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of students

3. Advocates for school policies, programs, and services that enhance a positive school climate and are equitable and responsive to multicultural student populations

4. Engages parents, guardians, and families to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of students

ASSESSMENTS

G. Knowledge

1. Understands the influence of multiple factors (e.g., abuse, violence, eating disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, childhood depression) that may affect the personal, social, and academic functioning of students

2. Knows the signs and symptoms of substance abuse in children and adolescents, as well as the signs and symptoms of living in a home where substance abuse occurs

3. Identifies various forms of needs assessments for academic, career, and personal/social development

H. Skills and Practices

1. Assesses and interprets students' strengths and needs, recognizing uniqueness in cultures, languages, values, backgrounds, and abilities

2. Selects appropriate assessment strategies that can be used to evaluate a student's academic, career, and personal/social development

3. Analyzes assessment information in a manner that produces valid inferences when evaluating the needs of individual students and assessing the effectiveness of educational programs

4. Makes appropriate referrals to school and/or community resources

5. Assesses barriers that impede students' academic, career, and personal/social development

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

I. Knowledge

1. Understands how to critically evaluate research relevant to the practice of school counseling

2. Knows models of program evaluation for school counseling programs Knows basic strategies for evaluating counseling outcomes in school counseling (e.g., behavioral observation, program evaluation)

3. Knows current methods of using data to inform decision making and accountability (e.g., school improvement plan, school report card)

4. Understands the outcome research data and best practices identified in the school counseling research literature

J.   Skills and Practices

1. Applies relevant research findings to inform the practice of school counseling

2. Develops measurable outcomes for school counseling programs, activities, interventions, and experiences

3. Analyzes and uses data to enhance school counseling

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

K.   Knowledge

1. Understands the relationship of the school counseling program to the academic mission of the school

2. Understands the concepts, principles, strategies, programs, and practices designed to close the achievement gap, promote student academic success, and prevent students from dropping out of school

3. Understands curriculum design, lesson plan development, classroom management strategies, and differentiated instructional strategies for teaching counseling- and guidance-related material

L.   Skills and Practices

1. Conducts programs designed to enhance student academic development

2. Implements strategies and activities to prepare students for a full range of postsecondary options and opportunities

3. Implements differentiated instructional strategies that draw on subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge and skills to promote student achievement

COLLABORATION AND CONSULTATION

M. Knowledge

1. Understands the ways in which student development, well-being, and learning are enhanced by family-school-community collaboration

2. Knows strategies to promote, develop, and enhance effective teamwork within the school and the larger community

3. Knows how to build effective working teams of school staff, parents, and community members to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of students

4. Understands systems theories, models, and processes of consultation in school system settings

5. Knows strategies and methods for working with parents, guardians, families, and communities to empower them to act on behalf of their children

6. Understands the various peer programming interventions (e.g., peer meditation, peer mentoring, peer tutoring) and how to coordinate them

7. Knows school and community collaboration models for crisis/disaster preparedness and response

N. Skills and Practices

1. Works with parents, guardians, and families to act on behalf of their children to address problems that affect student success in school

2. Locates resources in the community that can be used in the school to improve student achievement and success

3. Consults with teachers, staff, and community-based organizations to promote student academic, career, and personal/social development

4. Uses peer helping strategies in the school counseling program

5. Uses referral procedures with helping agents in the community (e.g., mental health centers, businesses, service groups) to secure assistance for students and their families.

LEADERSHIP

O.   Knowledge

1. Knows the qualities, principles, skills, and styles of effective leadership Knows strategies of leadership designed to enhance the learning environment of schools

2. Knows how to design, implement, manage, and evaluate a comprehensive school counseling program

3. Understands the important role of the school counselor as a system change agent Understands the school counselor's role in student assistance programs, school leadership, curriculum, and advisory meetings

P.   Skills and Practices

1. Participates in the design, implementation, management, and evaluation of a comprehensive developmental school counseling program

2. Plans and presents school-counseling-related educational programs for use with parents and teachers (e.g., parent education programs, materials used in classroom and advisor/advisee programs for teachers)

List of Competencies taken from NCATE Unit Standards 2008

Standard 1: Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions

1e. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR OTHER SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

UNACCEPTABLE Candidates for other professional school roles have not mastered the knowledge that undergirds their fields and is delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards. They are not able to use data, research or technology. They do not understand the cultural contexts of the school(s) in which they provide professional services. Fewer than 80 percent of the unit's program completers pass the academic content examinations in states that require such examinations for licensure.

ACCEPTABLE Candidates for other professional school roles have an adequate understanding of the knowledge expected in their fields and delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards. They know their students, families, and communities; use data and current research to inform their practices; use technology in their practices; and support student learning through their professional services. Eighty percent or more of the unit's program completers pass the academic content examinations in states that require such examinations for licensure.

TARGET Candidates for other professional school roles have an in-depth understanding of knowledge in their fields as delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards and demonstrated through inquiry, critical analysis, and synthesis. They collect and analyze data related to their work, reflect on their practice, and use research and technology to support and

improve student learning. All program completers pass the academic content examinations in states that require such examinations for licensure.

1f. STUDENT LEARNING FOR OTHER SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

UNACCEPTABLE Candidates for other professional school roles cannot facilitate student learning as they carry out their specialized roles in schools. They are unable to create positive environments for student learning appropriate to their responsibilities in schools. They do not have an understanding of the diversity and policy contexts within which they work.

ACCEPTABLE Candidates for other professional school roles are able to create positive environments for student learning. They understand and build upon the developmental levels of students with whom they work; the diversity of students, families, and communities; and the policy contexts within which they work.

TARGET Candidates for other professional school roles critique and are able to reflect on their work within the context of student learning. They establish educational environments that support student learning, collect and analyze data related to student learning, and apply strategies for improving student learning within their own jobs and schools.

Candidates preparing to work in schools in professional roles other than teaching demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to meet professional,[15] state, and

institutional standards reflected in the unit's conceptual framework. Candidates in programs for other school professionals should meet professional standards designed for programs preparing:

- educational technology specialists

- instructional technology specialists

- reading specialists/literacy coaches

- school leaders, including principals, curriculum and instruction specialists, and superintendents

- school library media specialists

- school psychologists

- special education administrators, educational diagnosticians, and special education technology specialists

- technology facilitators

- technology leaders

- other school professionals

Candidates in these graduate programs develop the ability to apply research and research methods. They also develop knowledge of learning, the social and cultural context in which learning takes place, and practices that support learning in their professional roles. Candidates might assess the school environment by collecting and analyzing data on student learning as it relates to their professional roles and developing positive environments supportive of student learning. Institutions must submit program documentation, including candidate assessments, scoring guides, and performance data that responds to professional standards for national and/or state review prior to and during the on-site visit.

This standard includes expectations for the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions of candidates in initial teacher preparation and advanced level programs. Initial teacher preparation programs include all programs that prepare individuals for their first license in teaching. These programs can be offered at the undergraduate or graduate levels. They include five-year programs, master's programs, and post-baccalaureate programs that prepare individuals for their first license in teaching.

Advanced programs include programs for licensed teachers continuing their education as well as programs for other school professionals. Advanced programs include programs for teachers who

are preparing at the graduate level for a second license in a field different from the field in which they have their first license; programs for teachers who are seeking a master's degree in the field in which they teach; and programs not tied to licensure, such as programs in curriculum and instruction. In addition, advanced programs include programs for other school professionals. Examples of these are programs in school counseling, school psychology, educational administration, and reading specialization. All advanced level programs are taught at the graduate level.

COVER LETTER FOR PRETEST SURVEY

EIRB#10431

Dear Participant,

As a former school counselor and currently working as faculty in an accredited University, you have been selected to participate in a pretest survey that will be conducted prior to carrying out dissertation research. You will be asked to answer each of the questions on the survey titled, 'The Importance of Family Systems Theory in Masters-level School Counseling Curriculum: A Study of Faculty Perceptions. The instrument is a survey comprised of two domains including demographic information and school counselor preparation programs and family systems coursework curriculum questionnaire. Please critically read over each of the questions in order to assess the degree to which they reflect the content being addressed. In addition, please briefly provide written feedback regarding errors of omission or commission (questions that you feel need to be asked that are not asked in the survey and questions that you feel are superfluous, redundant and unnecessary). Lastly, please address the clarity and understandability of the questions. Upon completion of the survey, please email me your feedback and any questions or concerns you may have. Please respond to the pretest survey within the next seven days. If you have any questions you can contact the PI at ggold@usf.edu or (941-726-8306).

Thank you very much for your time and effort. Your participation and feedback is greatly appreciated.

Warmly,

Gwen Gold
Doctoral Candidate, LMHC, MFT

SCHOOL COUNSELOR PROGRAM CURRICULUM—

SURVEY COVER LETTER

EIRB#10431

Dear Participant,

My name is Gwen Gold and I am a fourth year Doctoral candidate at the University of South Florida completing my Ph.D. in Counselor Education. As Chair/Coordinator of your masters-level school counseling program, you are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine the thoughts of Chair/Coordinator and faculty members of CACREP graduate school counselor programs with regard to their perception of the relevance of family systems theory to a comprehensive school counselor program. The ASCA website database was used to identify the 210 CACREP accredited college and university graduate school counseling preparation programs in the United States and your name was listed as Chair/Coordinator of your program.

There are a total of 35-questions on the survey and that should take approximately 14-20 minutes to complete. In addition to your filling out the survey, I would greatly appreciate if you could email my survey link to your school counseling faculty members. This is an anonymous survey. The weblink to this survey is: https://www.surveymonkeycom/s/XDX26K6

If you have any questions you can contact the PI at ggold@usf.edu or (941-726-8306). Thank you for your time and efforts. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Gwen Gold

Doctoral Candidate, LMHC, MFT

SCHOOL COUNSELOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS AND

FAMILY SYSTEMS COURSEWORK—

DEMOGRAPHIC AND CURRICULUM QUESTIONNAIRES

INTRO AND INFORMED CONSENT

Gwen Gold (ABD-PhD, LMHC, MFT) a fourth year Doctoral student at the University of South Florida would like to invite you to be part of this study, Educating School Counselor Students in Family Systems Concepts and Techniques: Curriculum Discrepancies. This study has IRB approval (XXXXXX).

This document is an informed consent form that will discuss the purpose of the study, risks and benefits, and other relevant information pertaining to the study.

The purpose of this study is to collect data for dissertation research. The primary researcher, Gwen Gold, will be assessing CACREP masters-level school counselor program faculty perception of the relevance of family systems theory to a comprehensive school counselor program.

A review of publications indicates a strong need for empirical studies on the teaching of family systems theory, concepts, and techniques in Master's level school counselor programs. The purpose of this study is to assess this need by gathering and examining the thoughts of faculty of graduate school counselor programs across the nation.

By agreeing to be a part of this study, you will be asked to complete this web-based survey about your experiences as faculty of the Master's level school counselor program. This survey is being sent to all CACREP Universities that offer masters-level school counseling programs in the United States. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

As a participant, you will be asked demographic information as well as questions related to the masters-level school counseling curricula, questions related to a family systems approach in curricula, and the training of University faculty in family systems theory and technique.

While you may not receive any direct benefit for participating, I hope that this study will contribute to the competency of school counselor graduates in systems theories.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time.

We will keep your study records private and confidential and all data will be coded. Certain people may need to see your study records including the researcher, study coordinator, other research staff, certain university members who need to know more about the study and the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Department of Health and Human Services and their related staff who have oversight responsibilities for the study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to. You are free to participate or withdraw at any time and there will be no penalty from doing so.

If you have questions about this study, you can contact Gwen Gold, ABD-PhD, LMHC, MFT, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, (941) 726-8306 or GGold@usf.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, general questions, or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-9343.

Thank you for your time and participation as it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Gwen Gold, Doctoral Candidate, LMHC, MFT

1.   I have read the informed consent and agree to participate in this study.

◯ Yes

◯ No

DEMOGRAPHICS

2.   What is your gender?

◯ Female

◯ Male

◯ Other

3.   What is your racial/ethnic background?

☐ African American

☐ Hispanic

☐ Native American

☐ Caucasian

☐ Asian or Pacific Islander

Other (please specify) [   ]

4   What is your age?

○ 21–29

○ 30–39

○ 40–49

○ 50–59

○ 60–69

○ 70–79

Other (please specify) [   ]

5.   What is your administrative position in your program/department?

○ Chair of the Department

○ Other

Please Specify [   ]

6.   Are you the person who coordinates the curriculum for your school counselor training program?

○ Yes

○ No

7.   What is your current academic appointment as school counselor program faculty?

○ Full Professor
○ Associate Professor with Tenure
○ Associate Professor without Tenure
○ Tenure Track Assistant Professor
○ Non-Tenure Track Assistant Professor
Other (please specify) [   ]

8.   What is your highest educational attainment level?

☐ Bachelor's
☐ Master's
☐ Specialist
☐ Doctoral
☐ Post-Doctoral
☐ Other (please specify) [   ]

9.   Which of the following is the accrediting body of your school counselor training program?

○ NCATE
○ CACREP
○ Both NCATE and CACREP
○ None of the above

10.   Which certification and/or license have you attained in your field?

Choose all that applies.

☐ Certified School Counselor
☐ Certified Teacher
☐ National Board Certified Counselor

☐ Registered Mental Health Counselor Intern

☐ Registered Marriage and Family Intern

☐ Licensed Mental Health Counselor

☐ Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

☐ Other (please specify) [_____]

11. Which professional organization are you an affiliated member? Choose

all that applies.

☐ American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

☐ American Counseling Association (ACA)

☐ Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES)

☐ Other (please specify) [_____]

12. Do you have prior professional experience working with children and

adolescents in K-12?

☐ Yes

☐ No

13. In which SETTING do you have prior professional experience in K-12?

Choose all that applies.

☐ Urban

☐ Suburban

☐ Rural

☐ None of the above

Other (please specify) [_____]

14. **Which GRADE LEVEL(S) do you have prior professional experience in**

K-12? Choose all that applies.

- ☐ Kindergarten
- ☐ Elementary School
- ☐ Middle School
- ☐ High School
- ☐ None of the above

Other (please specify) [_____]

15. **How many years of experience do you have as a professional in K-12**

- ○ 1–5
- ○ 6–10
- ○ 11–15
- ○ 15–20
- ○ 20–25
- ○ 25 and above

16. **Which ROLE(S) did you perform as a professional in K-12?**

- ☐ Counselor
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Principal
- ☐ None of the above

Other (please specify) [_____]

17. **Approximately how many students are admitted into your Master-level**

school counseling program during the past three years?

- ☐ 1–19
- ☐ 10–15

☐ 16–20

Other (please specify) [_____]

CURRICULUM

18. Does your program offer a course that covers family system theory?

 o Yes
 o No

19. Does your school counseling program currently offer a course in 'Family Systems Theory' as part of the CORE curriculum school counseling track?

○ Yes

○ No

20. Does your school counseling program currently offer a course in 'Family Systems Theory' as part of the ELECTIVE curriculum school counseling track?

○ Yes

○ No

21. How important is a theoretical foundation of family systems CONCEPTS in the role of a professional school counselor? (Please choose one)

Highly prepare	Moderately prepare	Somewhat prepare	Minimally prepare	
○	○	○	○	○

Comments [_____]

22. How important is a theoretical foundation of family systems TECHNIQUES in the role of a professional school counselor? (Please choose one)

Highly prepare	Moderately prepare	Somewhat prepare	Minimally prepare	
○	○	○	○	○

Comments _____

23. How important is a theoretical foundation of family systems concepts when the professional school counselor consults with (choose all that apply):

	Highly important	Moderately important	Somewhat important	Seldom impo	Not at all important
School Personnel	O	O	O	O	O
Parents of the Child	O	O	O	O	O
Guardian of the Child	O	O	O	O	O
Community Systems	O	O	O	O	O

Comments _____

24. How important is a theoretical foundation of family systems techniques when the professional school counselor consults with (choose all that apply):

	Highly important	Moderately important	Somewhat important	Seldom impo	Not at all important
School Personnel	O	O	O	O	O
Parents of the Child	O	O	O	O	O
Guardian of the Child	O	O	O	O	O
Community Systems	O	O	O	O	O

Comments _____

25. How well does your school counselor program prepare its graduate to work as a professional in the school setting using a family systems approach? (Please choose one)

Highly prepare	Moderately prepare	Somewhat prepare	Minimally prepare	
O	O	O	O	O

Comments [   ]

26. Which family system theorists does your school counselor program include in the coursework?

☐ Murray Bowen

☐ Salvador Minuchin

☐ Virginia Satir

☐ Carl Whitaker

☐ Jay Haley

☐ None

Other (please specify) [   ]

27. How competent do you feel in teaching a course in family systems concepts and techniques?

Highly prepare	Moderately prepare	Somewhat prepare	Minimally prepare	
○	○	○	○	○

Comments [   ]

28. Have you had training in family systems theories?

○ Yes

○ No

29. How well would professional development enhance your performance as an instructor of family systems theories?

Highly prepare	Moderately prepare	Somewhat prepare	Minimally prepare	
○	○	○	○	○

Comments [   ]

30. How familiar are you with CACREP standards for school counselor programs?

	Highly familiar	Moderately familiar	Somewhat familiar	Minimally fa	Not at all familiar
Please choose one	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

31. How familiar are you with ASCA standards for school counselor programs?

	Highly	Moderately	Not at all	No opinion
Please choose one	○	○	○	○

32. How important is it that school counselor faculty be familiar with CACREP standards for Master's level school counselor programs?

	Highly	Moderately	Not at all	No opinion
Please choose one	○	○	○	○

33. How specific are the following accrediting bodies and national organization with regard to the training of school counselor students in family systems?

	Highly specific	Moderately specific	Somewhat specific	Minimally	Not at all specific
1. NCATE	○	○	○	○	○
2. CACREP	○	○	○	○	○
3. ASCA National Model Standards	○	○	○	○	○

Comments [   ]

34. How well are the following CACREP objectives addressed in your school counseling program?

	Highly	Moderately	Somewha	Minimally	Not at all

	Highly	Moderately	Minimally	Not at all	No opinion
Individual, couple, and family intervention strategies in working with students K-12.	○	○	○	○	○
Integration of theories of individual and family development transition across life-span.	○	○	○	○	○
A systems perspective that provides an understanding of family systems theories and major models of family and related interventions.	○	○	○	○	○
Understands current models of school counseling programs (ASCA National Model) and their integral relationship to the total educational program.	○	○	○	○	○
Knows strategies for helping students identify strengths and cope with environmental and developmental problems.	○	○	○	○	○
Engages parents, guardians, and families to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of students.	○	○	○	○	○
Understands the ways in which student development, well-being, and learning are enhanced by family-school-community collaboration.	○	○	○	○	○
Understands systems theories, models, and processes of consultation in school system settings.	○	○	○	○	○
Knows strategies and methods for working with parents, guardians, families, and communities to empower them to act on behalf of their children.	○	○	○	○	○
Works with parents, guardians, and families to act on behalf of their children to address problems that affect student success in school.	○	○	○	○	○
Understands the important role of the school counselor as a system change agent.	○	○	○	○	○

Comments _____

35. How well are the following ASCA National Model standards for professional school counselors addressed in your school counselor training program?

	Highly	Moderately	Minimally	Not at all	No opinion
Individual counseling	○	○	○	○	○

Group counseling	○	○	○	○	○
Intervention and advocacy at the systemic level	○	○	○	○	○
Prevention and intervention activities at the systemic level	○	○	○	○	○
Coordination of ongoing systemic activities to help the student establish personal goals and develop future goals	○	○	○	○	○
Consultation with parents, teachers and other educators	○	○	○	○	○

Comments (elective)

36. How well does your school counseling program address the objectives of the ASCA National Standards for school counselor students?

	Highly addressed	Moderately addressed	Minimally addressed		No opinion
Identify and recognize changing family roles	○	○	○	○	○
Recognize and respect differences in various family configurations	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

37. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your participation and comments are highly valued. Please leave any additional comments below.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I received a BS degree in psychology from the University of South Florida, a MA degree in rehabilitation and mental health counseling from the University of South Florida, a certification in marriage and family therapy from the University of South Florida, and completed Ph.D. coursework and clinical supervision in counselor education at the University of South Florida with a concentration in family systems. I have practical experience as a mental health counselor, family therapist, case manager, and clinical director in both the private and non-profit sector. I am called upon to give expert testimony in family court in conjunction with the Safe Children Coalition, at-risk youth. I am a licensed mental health counselor, certified marriage and family therapist, and licensed qualified supervisor in the State of Florida. I conduct therapy with children, adults, and senior adults with various mental health disorders, at-risk youth, families in crisis, addictions counseling, medical management counseling, grief counseling, group facilitation for at-risk youth, parenting skills workshops, EAP referrals, and privately referred individuals. I am a consultant for school counselors - school aged children (K-12). I am a member in good standing of the American Counseling Association (ACA), Association for Counseling Education and Supervision (ACES), Florida Association for Counseling Education (FACE), International Family Therapy Association (IFTA), American Association for Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT), and Southeast Mental Health Counseling Association (SMHCA).