THE PROCESS OF BECOMING AN ADVOCATE FOR THE COUNSELING PROFESSION: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF COUNSELORS’ DEVELOPMENT TOWARD ADVOCACY

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THE PROCESS OF BECOMING AN ADVOCATE FOR THE COUNSELING PROFESSION: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF COUNSELORS’ DEVELOPMENT TOWARD ADVOCACY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how counselors develop into advocates for the counseling profession. Qualitative case study design was used when interviewing eight counselor advocates. Participants were chosen randomly from a list of attendees who were present at the 2008 state legislative advocacy training. Qualitative analysis was used to explore the data. Inductive and deductive reasoning was used to assist in coding data. As patterns emerged the data was clumped into four major themes. The four elements that affected the counselors’ journey toward becoming an advocate included education, mentorship, professional aspects, and personal aspects. The findings of this research indicated the positive impact that education and mentorship had on counselors becoming an advocate for the profession. Participants also discussed the positive influence that professional membership and professional identity has on advocacy endeavors. Moreover, participants gave details about the effects of personal aspects such as personal characteristics and personal experiences. This research supported findings in previous research and added information that has not yet been studied. It showed results that have implications on the counseling profession, counselor training programs, mentors, supervisors, students, and individual counselors. Additionally, this research gives a foundation for future researchers to build upon.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Justyce Adam and Jesyah Joseph. I love you so very much… not possible… a bushel and a peck.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

Introduction

Advocacy is currently a topic of great interest within the counseling profession and is the topic at local, state, and national counseling conferences. It fills journal titles and newsletter headlines. Professional committees are being developed to assist in advancing advocacy agendas while professional guidelines are being changed to incorporate advocacy competencies. Despite this emphasis on advocacy in the counseling profession, there are crucial gaps in the literature. The literature that does exist is an assortment of conceptual information with no theoretical framework. This chapter provides a brief overview of advocacy literature and how the crucial gap in the literature has inspired a qualitative study that investigates how counselors become advocates for the counseling profession. This chapter will be an introduction to the following chapters.

Advocacy is a broad concept with numerous definitions (Bemak and Chung, 2005; Brawley, 1997; Budd and Eyberg, 2005; Cohen, 2004; Dalrymple, 2004; Eriksen, 1997b, 1999; Field, 1997; Field and Baker, 2004; Kiselica and Robinson, 2001). In addition to many definitions, there are numerous types of advocacy. Ezell (2001) referred to thirteen types of advocacy in his book, Advocacy in the Human Services. The two
levels discussed most frequently in counseling literature are clinical and professional advocacy (Brawley, 1997; Myers and Sweeney, 2004). For the purpose of this study, a brief history of both types were presented, however the focus remained on the development of a counselor-advocate as it pertains to professional advocacy (i.e., advocating for the counseling profession). The definition utilized for this research was empirically developed in a pilot study by White and Semivan (2006), of which the details will be discussed in chapter two. White and Semivan’s definition has been adapted slightly for the appropriateness of this study. For the purpose of this study advocacy was defined as a process that leads to create change by using personal and professional skills to promote, empower, support, and/or protect the growth and development of the counseling profession.

The term “client advocacy” appeared in counseling literature in the early 1900’s. The client advocacy literature credits Frank Parsons and Clifford Beers for establishing advocacy practices for oppressed and underrepresented populations (Kiselica and Robinson, 2001). Kiselica and Robinson provide a synopsis of the history of client advocacy from 1905 to 2000. In this historical highlight they note the work of advocates such as Parsons, Horney, Rogers, and Gunnings.

Professional advocacy has also been an integral part of the counseling profession since its inception. Advocating for their professional needs and advocating for the development of their profession, counselors created professional organizations. Through professional organizations, counselor-advocates have since established a counseling awareness month, legislative training institutes, and advocacy committees that assist in advancing the profession. Counselors continued to advocate for the profession by
establishing education criteria, accreditation standards, and licensure requirements. The standards and education criteria now emphasize the importance that advocacy has on the advancement and mission of the counseling profession. Advocacy is mentioned numerous times in the professional code of ethics in the accreditation standards (American Counseling Association, 2007). The development of organizations, standards and criteria has strengthened the profession by solidifying its position in the mental health field. One of the most influential advocacy endeavors over the past thirty years was the implementation of counseling licensure. Members in counseling organizations have advocated for licensure with the argument that counselors have the educational standards and criteria similar to other licensed mental health professionals. Currently, forty-nine states have attained licensure as a result of counselors advocating for their profession’s advancement. These developments have increased the public’s knowledge about counselors and united counselors to advocate for individual and professional needs. Despite the obvious advancements that have been the result of advocacy, the literature on advocacy for the profession remains inadequate.

State of Advocacy Literature

Although the advocacy literature has increased over the past decade, it remains disparate. There are assortments of pieces written to inform counselors of advocacy practices; yet only minimal evidence supporting these claims exist. Most advocacy articles highlight a variety of pieces about advocacy including the steps/processes, competencies, and techniques of advocacy. The literature refers to the same basic
processes of advocacy but uses different terms and details to describe the stages (Eriksen, 1997a, 1997b, 1999; Kiselica and Robinson, 2001; Myers, Sweeney and White, 2002; Trusty and Brown, 2005). Despite no evidence that these stages are beneficial to advocacy efforts, these steps were utilized to assist in developing the advocacy competencies, now supported by the American Counseling Association (ACA).

Advocacy competencies, developed by Lewis, Arnold, House, and Toporek (2002), emphasized client/student empowerment, client/student advocacy, community collaboration, system advocacy, public awareness, and social/political advocacy (ACA 2009; Toporek, Lewis and Crethar, 2009). ACA, the flagship organization of the counseling profession, publicly supports the implementation of these competencies, even though there is no evidence that they are advantageous in assisting counselor-advocates. Numerous techniques that can be utilized to meet the competencies (Eriksen, 1999; Knitzer, 2005; Mc Curdy and Gillig, 2005; Moore Caira et al., 2003; Priscilla, 1999; Queiro-Tajalli, McNutt, and Campbell, n.d.) have been highlighted in the literature. Methods of implementation included contacting legislators, speaking at a local library, contacting media that misrepresent mental illness, and organizing advocacy trainings, to name a few. Although there is no research about which strategies are more effective with a particular advocacy agenda, it can be assumed that the advocacy strategies differ depending on the type of advocacy, the cause, the advocate. In addition, there is no research about whether the competencies can be utilized with all techniques. The general advocacy information is important but more empirical research is needed to intertwine the pieces.
In addition to the medley of advocacy pieces discussed above, several trends have become prevalent in recent advocacy literature including education and training, counseling skills and qualities, and counselor identity. Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) and Moore Caira et al. (2003) discussed the impact that education and training have on advocacy efforts. Both of these articles found that training increased students’ commitment to advocacy and students’ advocacy efforts. In addition to education and training, the literature reveals that counseling skills and qualities also influence advocacy. Trusty and Brown (2005) maintained that personal qualities, knowledge, and skills are all needed to be an effective advocate. The same qualities that make an effective counselor are necessary be an effective advocate. For example, advocates utilize the counseling skills of communication, flexibility, knowledge of resources, and negotiation. In addition, counselor-advocates have the capability to identify levels of need and the ability to use clarification, reflection, and confrontation (Earle, 1990; Erien, 2006; Kurpius and Rozechi, 1992; Trusty and Brown, 2005).

Although counseling skills and qualities are necessary to become an advocate, they are not sufficient or all counselors would be advocates. If skills and qualities are not enough, what else do counselors need to become advocates? Eriksen (1997b) and Myers, Sweeney, and White (2002) identified that there are many components to a counselor-advocate. The final trend that has emerged in the literature identifies that counselor-advocates have a solidified professional identity. Moreover, these authors refer to solidifying an identity as a step in the advocacy process. These two studies also concluded that professional identity and counseling skills are vital for successful advocacy and that these essential elements are impacted by education and training.
Despite there being select research about the possible factors that affect an advocate, the majority of the information about advocacy in the counseling field is conceptual. The conceptual literature focuses on content: definitions, stages, techniques, and competencies. Although the literature about education and training, skills and qualities, and counselor identity reflects that these elements impact advocacy, there is a need to understand how these components affect the counselors who advocate for the profession. Moreover, there is a need for an explorative study investigating what other elements impact a counselor’s process to become an advocate.

Statement of the Problem

Advocacy has been integral to the development of the counseling profession at the client and professional level. However, the counseling profession does not discern what components impact the counselors who are found to be advocates of the profession. There are two problems that this study will address. The first problem is that the profession does not know specific information about the persons who advocate for the counseling profession. Not understanding who advocates can impact the profession greatly. For instance, the profession does not know where to concentrate the advocacy agendas. The advocacy agendas for the counseling profession may be promoted on deaf ears, being that the profession is unaware of who will become an advocate, which would exhaust resources without benefiting the profession. Secondly, little research has been conducted that explores the process that advocates encounter when becoming an advocate.
for the profession. By understanding the process of becoming an advocate, the profession can better assist counselors on this journey.

Purpose of the Study

This research was a qualitative case study investigation, exploring the experience of counselors who have become counselor-advocates. The purpose of this study was to increase awareness about the process of becoming an advocate for the counseling profession. Understanding this process will give the profession more information on counselors who do advocate for the counseling profession. Identifying the core components/characteristics that affect a counselor’s development into a counselor-advocate may assist professionals in understanding how to enlist potential advocates. Once counseling professionals understand the process of advocacy, future researchers may also determine how different graduate training courses or programs impact professional advocacy efforts. Training programs could facilitate this knowledge to increase the quality and quantity of advocates. Knowledge about the characteristics of advocates may also assist the counseling profession in identifying where to promote advocacy agendas, thus promoting their advocacy strategies to targeted audiences.

Research Question

My awareness of the need for professional advocacy sparked my interest in advocacy as a research topic. My curiosity about why some people advocate and others
do not advocate prompted my specific research question. The fact that no research explores the elements and characteristics that affect the process of becoming an advocate for the counseling profession further solidified my responsibility in exploring this area of research. In summary, the gap in the literature and my own personal journey from counselor to counselor-advocate led me to the general research question of how do counselors develop into advocates for the counseling profession.

Delimitations

There are several delimitations in this study. First, this research is delimited to looking at advocacy from the perspective of counselors who have attended the American Counseling Association’s Legislative Institute or the State Legislative Training. Second, for the convenience of interviewing, all participants were located geographically close to the researcher. Third, this study does not address advocacy efforts for clients (as opposed to advocating for the profession).

Limitations

The population included only advocates who attended ACA advocacy training seminars at the national and state levels that were willing to participate in the study. Characteristics of the counselor-advocates who do not advocate for the profession (only for clients), counselors who did not attend the ACA advocacy training seminars and training attendees who chose not to participate will not be represented in this study.
Additionally, the professional support for advocacy may cause the counselor-advocates to respond in a more positive manner, causing social desirability response bias.

Summary

Although there is minimal research about advocacy, extant literature reveals recent trends including the importance of education (Field and Baker, 2004; Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter, 2006; Moore Caira et al., 2003; Van Soest 1996;), the utilization of counseling techniques and skills (Earle, 1990; Eriksen, 1999; Erin, 2006; Field and Baker, 2004; Kurpius and Rozeci, 1992) and the significance of professional identity (Eriksen, 1999; Myers and Sweeney, 2004; Myers, Sweeney and White, 2002; Hill, Bandfield, and White, 2007) on advocacy and advocacy efforts. Despite there being clear themes that appear in counseling literature, no research has been conducted on how these characteristics influence counselors that develop into counselor-advocates. This gap in the literature leads to the research question, “How do counselors develop into advocates for the counseling profession?” Understanding this process will give the counseling profession information about who advocates and what characteristics influence their advocacy efforts.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The following is a review of the literature on advocating within counseling profession. To begin the different types of advocacy will be defined and then the two most popular types of advocacy in the counseling field, client and professional will be summarized. Next, I will critique the current state of advocacy. I will give an overview of the conceptual medley that exists in the literature and the trends that have emerged with empirical evidence of their impact on advocacy efforts will complete this chapter. Finally, the summary will bridge how the gap in the literature has led to this research question.

Defining Advocacy

The literature reveals that advocacy is an expansive concept with a variety of definitions (Bemak and Chung, 2005; Brawley, 1997; Budd and Eyberg, 2005; Cohen, 2004; Dalrymple, 2004; Eriksen, 1997a, 1997b, 1999; Ezell, 2001; Field, 1997; Field and
Baker, 2004; Kiselica and Robinson, 2001). In its most elementary form, advocacy is defined as “To defend or promote a cause” (Ezell p.22). In the counseling literature, most definitions of advocacy include some form of taking action to change environments on behalf of clients (Kiselica and Robinson). For example, Ezell defined advocacy as, “purposive efforts to change specific existing or proposed policies or practices on behalf of or with a specific client or group of clients” (p. 23). However, Field and Baker sought to expand the meaning of advocacy beyond a simple definition. They define an advocate as, “one who pleads the cause of another or one who defends or maintains a cause” (p. 56). They reported that advocacy should include case level advocacy, supporting colleagues, fulfilling ethical obligations, and advocating for the counseling profession. In the draft of new forthcoming standards, the Council for Accrediting Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) included a definition section. Advocacy is defined in this section as

- action taken on behalf of clients and/or the counseling profession to support appropriate policies and standards for the counseling profession and promote individual human worth, dignity, and potential and to oppose or work to change policies and procedures, systemic barriers, long-standing traditions, or preconceived notions that stifle human development. (CACREP, 2009, p. 58)

The abundance of definitions may be the result of there being various types of advocacy. Many conceptual pieces on advocacy discuss the numerous types of advocacy (Brawley, 1997; Eddy, Richardson and Erpenbach, 1982; Eriksen, 1997b, 1999; Ezell, 2001; Myers and Sweeney, 2004; Sosin and Caulum, 1983; Trusty and Brown, 2005). Ezell listed and defined fourteen types of advocacy: case, class, internal, external, systems, policy, political, self, clinical, direct service, citizen, legal, legislative, and community. These different types also have diverse definitions. In addition, the
definitions of these types of advocacy often overlap. For example, system advocacy was defined by Schloss and Jayne (1994, as cited in Ezell, 2001) as, “promotion to change policies and practices affecting all persons in a certain group or class” (p.230), and Amidei (1991, as cited in Ezell, 2001) defined policy advocacy as, “efforts to influence those who work with law, public programs or court decisions” (p.27). Both of these definitions can include counselors as a group of people attempting to work with legal and public policies to advocate for the counseling profession.

Despite there being various types of advocacy, the counseling literature focuses on two main types, individual and professional advocacy. Myers and Sweeney and Edwin (1982) described advocacy as “two-pronged”, clinical and professional, which are, in some ways, intertwined. The remainder of this literature review will focuses on these two primary types of advocacy.

Although client advocacy, known more recently as social justice advocacy, will be discussed briefly, this research will concentrate primarily on advocacy for the counseling profession, referred to in this document as professional advocacy or advocacy for the profession. With the exception of Field and Baker’s definition, the aforementioned definitions of advocacy are not a result of any empirical research. This gap in the literature inspired the development of a pilot project, by White and Semivan (2006), to more effectively define advocacy from a counseling perspective.

The goals of this pilot study were to operationally define advocacy and to identify the components of advocacy. An internet survey was sent to leaders in the counseling profession who were asked to define advocacy and identify the top five components pertinent to advocacy. Emails were sent to leaders holding office in CACREP, the State
Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), American Counseling Association (ACA), and state and regional level counseling organizations. Twenty-four leaders responded to the questionnaire. Of the respondents, nine were between the ages of fifty and fifty-nine, five were between the ages of forty and forty-nine, five were between the age of thirty and thirty-nine, four were sixty years old or older and only one participant was between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine. Nine of the participants were male and sixteen were female. In addition, twenty-two participants held two or more leadership positions where as only two participants held less than two leadership positions. Each participant was asked four questions. They were asked 1.) to define advocacy, 2.) to identify the differences between advocating for the counseling profession and advocating for a client, 3.) to list the top five components of advocacy, 4.) and to list three reasons why advocacy skills are important for counselors to learn. The information collected was qualitatively analyzed. The researchers coded and recoded the data. The codes were linked to make themes. The themes that emerged were melded into an encompassing definition of advocacy by the researchers. This research, has adapted the last four words of the pilot study definition from “…an organization or person” to “of the counseling profession”. This minor change further aligns the definition with professional advocacy, making it more appropriate for this research. The definition of professional advocacy that was utilized in this research project was, “a process that seeks to create change by using personal and professional skills to promote, empower, support and/or protect the growth and development of the counseling profession.”
History of Advocacy within the Counseling Profession

In spite of the difficulties of reaching a consensus on the definition of advocacy in the profession of counseling, client and professional advocacy have a long history in the field. An understanding of the history of advocacy is necessary in order to comprehend how advocacy has impacted the counseling profession’s development. Reviewing how advocacy has impacted the counseling profession will also cast light on why client and professional advocacy are the most prominent types of advocacy discussed in the counseling literature. Being that it is not the focus of this research, the history of client advocacy will be condensed into a brief overview. This is not to suggest that the significance of client advocacy pales in comparison to advocating for the profession but due to the focus of this research the literature review will focus more on professional advocacy.

History of client advocacy

There is a long history of advocacy which entails counselors advocating for disenfranchised and underrepresented populations (Bemack and Chung, 2005; Kisleica and Robinson, 2001). Bemak and Chung (2005) indicated that the term advocacy was first used in the mental health field in the 1700’s and was documented in the school counseling field in the 1900’s. In the early twentieth century, Clifford Beers and Frank Parsons began advocating for vulnerable and neglected populations (Kiselica and Robinson, 2001; Vacc and Loesch, 2000). Beers promoted public awareness of the
treatment of mentally ill clients being housed in psychiatric hospitals. Kiselica and Robinson declared that Beers “was the forerunner of some of the most influential mental health advocacy groups that exist today, including the National Mental Health Association and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill” (p. 3). Other authors credited Frank Parsons with the advocacy movement within the counseling profession (Vacc and Loesch). Parsons advocated for students by counseling them on their vocational choices. Although Parsons’ work was referred to as counseling, it was more similar to advocating for the clients’ needs. This was different from traditional psychotherapy conducted by psychologists in that this “counseling” was conducted on “normal” yet underrepresented populations (Vacc and Loesch). As a result of Parsons’ work, The Vocational Bureau of Boston sought to title these advocating professionals as counselors (Jones, 1994, as cited in Vacc and Loesch,). This was the first time that helping professionals were referred to as counselors, which was a direct result from client advocacy.

In addition to the work of Beers and Parsons, Kiselica and Robinson (2001) highlighted the efforts of persons who work to “advocate on behalf of misunderstood, maltreated, and neglected populations” (p. 79). Kiselica and Robinson also cited the social justice advocacy endeavors of Horney, Carl Rogers, Massimo, Krumboltz, Peltier, and Gunning. Kisleica and Robinson further highlighted how counselor organizations have advocated for clients. For example, they reported that the ACA and the American Psychological Association published a manuscript advocating for understanding the sexual orientation of youth populations. The overview of advocacy by Kisleica and Robinson dates from the early 1900’s to 2000. Their advocacy time line illustrates how advocacy has been an integral part of the profession since its inception.
The focus on client advocacy has continued to grow and is referred to in more recent literature as ‘social justice advocacy’. There have been social justice advocacy movements within the counseling profession including advocating for persons affected by national disasters, advocating for veterans and the multiculturalism movement, to name just a few. Depending on the specific area of interest there is literature about the social justice advocacy movement surrounding each cause. Although, social justice literature will not be the focus of this research, it should be noted that it is becoming more popular in the professional literature. Despite the fact that client advocacy has been documented in greater detail than that of advocacy for the counseling profession, the history of professional advocacy remains important additionally it is the concentration for this research.

History of advocacy for the profession

To fully understand the impact of client advocacy one must comprehend the importance of advocating for the counseling profession. This researcher believes that the strength of client advocacy is reliant on the strength of professional advocacy. Fortifying the counseling profession through advocacy has and will continue to increase the impact that counselors can have when advocating for clients. Myers and Sweeney (2004) claimed that, “advocacy for the profession has the potential to place counselors in positions where they can advocate effectively for the causes of clients” (p. 466) emphasizing the overlap between professional and client advocacy (Myers, Sweeney and White, 2002). Moreover, Witmer and Carter Mague (1982) affirmed that, “If counseling
is not merely to survive, but is to grow, meet the needs, function as an advocate for human rights and have an impact on the future as a change agent, counselors must be willing to develop and exert power and influence” (p. 629), inferring that counselors must advocate for the professions power and place within the mental health field.

Despite the obvious importance of advocating for the profession, the history of advocacy for the profession is not well documented. Unlike client focused advocacy, advocacy for the profession is not discussed at length in counseling literature. Due to the lack of information about professional advocacy an overview of how professional advocacy can be traced through professional organizations and professional licensure will be presented. There will also be a brief discussion on how organizations continue to foster advocacy for the counseling profession.

History of professional organizations and licensure

Despite not having a precise record of advocacy for the profession, it can be presumed that professional advocacy has been an element of the profession for decades. Although it is not explicitly indicated in the literature that professional organizations, education criteria, accreditation standards, and accountability are all a result of professional advocacy, it can be logically presumed that the development of such advancements were the result of advocacy as it is defined by White and Semivan (2006). Counselors developed organizations, criteria, standards, and accountability because they sought to promote, empower, support, and protect the growth and development of the counseling profession. Not only were professional organizations, education criteria,
standards, and accountability established as a result of advocacy, leaders of these entities have also made it their mission to promote advocacy for the counseling profession. This section will review how counselors united to promote the growth of the profession through advocacy and how counseling entities and professionals continue to foster the advocacy movement.

The development of the flagship organization, ACA

In 1913, individual counselors united and advocated for their professional needs by developing the first professional organization, the National Vocation Guidance Association, currently called the National Career Development Association (NCDA) (NCDA, 2009). The American College Personnel Association (NCPA) was established in 1924; the Student Personnel Association for Teacher Education (SPATE) was developed in 1931, and the National Association of Guidance Supervisors and Counselor Trainers (NAGSCT) launched in 1940. In 1952, these organizations combined their efforts “in hopes of providing a larger professional voice” and formed the American Personnel and Guidance Association. In 1983 the organization changed its name to the American Association for Counseling Development, which is currently titled the American Counseling Association (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2009; Sheeley, 2002). These four organizations united under the mission “to enhance the quality of life in society by promoting the development of professional counselors, advancing the counseling profession and using the profession and practice of counseling
to promote respect for human dignity and diversity” (http://www.counseling.org/). In essence the ACA was established with a mission to advocate for the profession.

Since ACA’s development, the organization has continued to grow and advocate for members’ needs. In 1970, the ACA established fifty-six branches and local chapters. Today, there are also nineteen divisions, two organizational affiliates, four regions and fifty-six branches in the United States, Europe, and Latin America (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2009; Sheeley, 2002). Each of these branches and chapters continue to carry on ACA’s commitment to advocacy. ACA has illustrated their commitment to advocacy in a variety of ways one of which was establishing a counselor awareness month. In 1994, the ACA illustrated their commitment to advocacy by establishing April as Counselor Awareness Month, in which it hosted numerous activities that publicized and advocate for the counseling profession. In addition, ACA has shown their dedication by their commitment to teach counselors about advocacy. In 1999, the movement of advocacy for counseling was illustrated by the ACA conference theme, “Advocacy: A Voice for our Clients and Communities.” The ACA has hosted legislative institute training conferences to disseminate the need for advocacy of the profession as well as getting bills passed that effect counselors and/or their clientele (ACA, 2009).

The ACA continues to foster the advocacy movement by maintaining that advocacy be a fundamental part of counseling (Field and Baker, 2004). The ACA reiterated this commitment on its website declaring that the ACA provides “leadership training, publications, continuing education opportunities, and advocacy services to nearly forty-five thousand members” (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2009). Myers and Sweeney (2004) found through their research that the majority of professional
counseling organizations encourage advocacy. Fifty-two percent of the organizational leaders reported that their organizations have a statement requiring involvement in advocacy activities, sixty-five percent of organizations had committees with an advocacy agenda, and fifty-one percent of organizations reported paying an advocacy fee as part of their organizational dues (Myers and Sweeney, 2004). In sum, advocacy has been an integral part in developing the counseling profession and illustrated in the formation and continuation of professional counseling organizations.

Accreditation and certification organizations

Despite having the strength of professional organizations, counselors needed to take additional steps to develop the profession. Therefore, counselors advocated for their needs and established accrediting bodies and certification boards. The next section will discuss two independent bodies established, as a result of advocacy, to strengthen the profession.

One of these accrediting agencies developed by counselor-advocates is CACREP. CACREP was developed in 1981 from “the work of CACES, Association of Counselor Education and Supervision, and American School Counseling Association” (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs [CACREP], 2009). Although it is not explicitly stated, it can be ventured that CACREP was created as a product of professional advocacy by ACA members. CACREP was developed to “provide leadership and to promote excellence in professional preparation though the accreditation of counseling and related educational programs” (Council for Accreditation
of Counseling and Related Education Programs, 2009). Members of CACREP generated accreditation standards and created educational criteria to increase the credibility of the counseling profession. These members were advocating for the status of the counseling profession within the mental health field. The product of this professional advocacy has provided many benefits to the profession including quality assurance of graduate level training programs, unity amongst professionals, and assurance of professional standards. In addition, establishing such standards allowed counselors to receive third-party reimbursements for their services, another byproduct of this professional advocacy effort (Smith and Robinson, 1995).

CACREP fosters the improvement of the counseling profession which, in turn, strengthens individual counselors. Not only does CACREP attempt to strengthen the profession one counselor at a time, it also encourages advocacy at the client and professional levels. The standards state that counselors must “Understand effective strategies supporting client advocacy and influencing public policy and government relations on local, state, and national levels to enhance equity, increase funding and promote programs that affect the practice of clinical mental health counseling.” (Council for Accrediting Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2009, p. 19). Additional standards require that a counselor “demonstrates the ability to advocate for the profession and its’ clientele” (CACREP p. 56). In summary, the leaders at CACREP appreciate the magnitude that advocacy has on the counseling profession thus advocacy is mentioned nineteen times in the draft of the 2009 CACREP accreditation standards (CACREP).
After the development of CACREP, members of an ACA committee advocated for the development of a certification agency (National Board for Certified Counselors [NBCC], 2009). The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) was established in 1982, creating accountability and education criteria for counseling professionals. Although it is not specified in the literature, it can be presumed that the NBCC was developed as a result of counselors advocating to promote excellence of the counseling profession. NBCC has increased standards within the counseling profession; in addition it has enhanced the visibility of the counseling profession thereby enhancing counselors’ credibility. Presently, the NBCC works with the ACA to promote the counseling profession. NBCC reports that it “actively promotes the counseling profession and credential holders on the national and state levels. NBCC offers guidance and support to leaders and individuals on specific state initiatives and also provides targeted outreach on critical advocacy issues” (NBCC, 2009). The NBCC’s homepage contains professional advocacy information, including information on global initiatives, updates to congressional reports and information about how counselors can become involved in advocating for the profession (NBCC, 2009). The National Board for Certified Counselors is currently known as one of the leading counseling organizations that promotes professional advocacy.

Counseling licensure development

As the profession strengthened with professional counseling organizations, accreditation, and certification, counselor-advocates sought to further advance the
profession by advocating for the development of counselor licensure. Originally, psychiatrists monopolized the mental health service arena. Mack (1982) (as cited in Eriksen, 1997b) stated that after thirty-two years of advocating for the right to practice, psychologists achieved the right to practice as mental health clinicians. After attaining their right to practice, the courts enforced a psychologist initiated practice act which was designed to limit who could practice as mental health clinicians. This act led to the Weldon vs. Virginia State Board court case. The decision of the case mandated that clinicians have a license to counsel which in turn forced counselors to terminate their practices due to the lack of licensure. At this point counselors then began advocating for their own mental health practice licensure (Eriksen).

Professional advocacy reached a milestone when counseling licensure was achieved in Virginia in 1976 (Eriksen, 1997b). This was a key victory for counselors advocating for the counseling profession. Counselors have continued to advocate for licensure in all states since the 1976 triumph. The most recent licensure victory was attained in 2007 in Nevada. Currently, forty-nine states have achieved counseling licensure as a result of professional advocacy efforts; only California remains. The ACA reported that in 2007 there were 154,981 licensed professional counselors and marriage and family therapists in the United States (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2009). Although attaining licensure in forty-nine states is a colossal accomplishment for the counseling profession, there are still countless advocacy agendas that could benefit the counseling profession, such as, mental health parity and Medicare coverage of counselors.
Understanding the history of the profession is imperative when trying to understand the role that advocacy plays in the counseling profession. Despite its importance, the history of professional advocacy is only part of the agenda of this literature review. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the current state of the advocacy literature and the trends that have emerged in the professional advocacy literature.

Current State of Advocacy Literature

Despite the importance of advocacy in the development of the counseling profession, there is limited empirical research on professional advocacy. Within the counseling literature, conceptual and research pieces focus primarily on the client, ignoring an entire subset of advocacy, professional advocacy. In addition, there are articles that discuss general advocacy including definitions, advocacy steps, competencies, and techniques yet no literature ties together these seemingly unrelated general elements. In addition to the general information about advocacy, several empirically supported themes emerge in the literature including the impact of education and training on advocacy efforts, the usefulness of counseling skills and qualities for advocates, and how essential having a solidified counselor identity is to counselor-advocates. Despite the emergence of themes in the literature no research has tested how these pieces are interconnected.

In the following section, advocacy literature in counseling and related fields will be reviewed. Miscellaneous information and the research concerning the components that
affect advocacy efforts will be summarized. The summary will discuss how current literature has shaped this research.

Steps of advocacy

According to most authors there are certain generally accepted phases of advocacy that are carried out regardless of the specific type advocacy. Many researchers refer to the same basic stages of advocacy but use different nomenclature to describe them (Eriksen, 1997b, 1999; Kiselica and Robinson, 2001; Knitzer, 2005; Moore Caira, et al., 2003; Myers, Sweeney and White, 2002; Roer-Strier, 2002; Trusty and Brown, 2005; Van-belle, Marks, Martin and Chun, 2006). Trusty and Brown (2005) referenced an advocacy model that is based on the guidelines and competencies that they developed for school counselor advocates. The steps in this model included strengthening advocacy relationships and advocacy knowledge, defining the problem, constructing and implementing action, making evaluations, and celebrating or regrouping. Moore Caira et al. (2003) discussed advocacy steps, similar to the aforementioned, but broke them into individual and policy level steps. They note that their advocacy training began with an overview of these principles but they did not reference how they empirically identified these steps (Moore Caira et al., 2003). Myers, Sweeney, and White (2002) added identity to the previously mentioned steps of advocacy. They stated that solidifying a professional identity is a key step in advocating that should be undertaken prior to identifying the problem (Myers, Sweeney, and White, 2002). This step is obviously important for professional advocacy because professional identity is the self-conceptualization that
“serves as a frame of reference from which one carries out a professional role, makes significant professional decisions, and develops as a professional” (Brott and Myers, 1999; p. 1).

Despite the emphasis on the stages of advocacy by numerous authors, Eriksen (1999) was the only author that empirically identified steps. In an ethnographic qualitative dissertation study Eriksen (1997a) interviewed twenty-eight leaders in the counseling field who were involved in advocacy. The majority of her participants were white, doctoral level, licensed professional counselors. Additionally, the majority of the participants were between the ages of 40 and 49 and identified as mental health counselors who have advocated for over eleven years, most of which advocated at the national level. Eriksen organized the data into fifteen categories. In her 1999 article describing her dissertation research from 1997, Eriksen discussed the categories of the essential elements of advocacy, advocacy processes, and advocacy targets and activities. Eriksen found that “counselors need to use those characteristics that make them effective counselors” and that counselor-advocates need to have a “clear sense of professional identity” (Eriksen, 1999; p. 39). Eriksen also reported that counselor-advocates recognized that the steps of advocacy include: identifying the problem, assessing resources, developing a plan, training members, and celebrating success. Additionally, Eriksen discussed the advocacy activities used to target specific groups including legislative representatives, the public, insurance companies, employers, and professional organizations.

Many authors discuss advocacy steps yet only Erikson’s study empirically examined how advocates move (step) through advocacy endeavors. Surprisingly no
research has been conducted to confirm that all types of advocates (client, professional, etc) go through the same steps when advocating. Although many advocates may agree with the steps based on their own personal experience, no empirical research verifies the accuracy of the theory that counselor-advocates are implying in their theoretical pieces.

Advocacy competencies

Building off of the stage model literature, advocacy competencies were recently developed for the counseling profession. During Jane Goodman’s term as American Counseling Association President, she appointed an Advocacy Competencies Task Force with the responsibility of developing advocacy competencies (Toporek, Lewis and Crethar, 2009). In 2003, the ACA Governing Council endorsed the Advocacy Competencies developed by Lewis, Arnold, House, and Toporek (ACA, 2009; Toporek, Lewis and Crethar). This model highlights client/student empowerment, client/student advocacy, community collaboration, system advocacy, public awareness, and social/political advocacy. The basic premise of these competencies aligns with the stage models previously discussed. For example, counselors need to identify the problem, identify resources, skills, and barriers, develop relationships with allies, and carry out a plan of action. The competencies address advocacy on a micro, or client, level and on a macro, or professional, level. Trusty and Brown (2005) also developed advocacy competencies for professional school counselors. They reports that they used Fiedler (2000) special education advocacy competencies that they drew from their personal experiences and developed a list of advocacy competencies specific to school counseling.
Fiedler created special education competencies that drew from personal experiences and then developed advocacy competencies specific to school counseling. From the special education competencies Trusty and Brown developed advocacy competencies for professional school counselors. This list includes advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills. One critique of these competencies is that they were not developed as a result of empirical research.

In addition the effectiveness of incorporating advocacy competencies has not been researched. As Smith, Reynolds, and Rovnak (2009) point out, in their theoretical piece titled ‘A Critical Analysis of the Social Advocacy Movement in Counseling’, there is no empirical evidence to justify the advocacy competencies. Additionally, there is no evidence that indicates that this one set of competencies is compatible with all advocacy techniques. Moreover, the competencies offer content, but no information on the application or the process of becoming a competent counselor-advocate. The stages and competencies relay what counselors need to accomplish but not how a counselor develops into an advocate who can accomplish such tasks.

Advocacy techniques

There are numerous ways to advocate for clients and the counseling profession (Eriksen, 1999; Knitzer, 2005; Mc Curdy and Gillig, 2005; Moore Caira et al., 2003; Priscilla, 1999; Queiro-Tajalli, McNutt, and Campbell, n.d.). In an article about her personal journey as an advocate for children, Knitzer (2005) suggested implications for psychologist and advocates, these included educating oneself about the issues affecting
your practice, collaborating with colleagues, and joining forces with policymakers. Specific advocacy actions may include, but are not limited to, writing, phoning or faxing legislators (Eriksen), organizing annual advocacy trainings, creating a legislative network, holding press conferences, giving testimony at hearings, developing policy for legislation, writing position papers and editorials (Moore Caira, et al.), educating media representatives, conducting interviews with the media, raising awareness of problems and, partaking in educational programming (Priscilla).

In an informative piece about international social and economic justice and online advocacy, Queiro-Tajalli, McNutt, and Campbell (n.d.) discuss ways for social workers to advocate online including research advocacy issues, email decision makers, develop an advocacy website, and conduct web conferencing. The international counseling academic and professional honor society’s (Chi Sigma Iota) newsletter has a section designated to advocacy strategies and suggestions for other counselors. Some ideas suggested in this newsletter section include organizing an advocacy week and incorporating advocacy into counselor education programs (Mc Curdy and Gillig, 2005). Despite there being an emphasis on what counselors should do to advocate, none of these articles empirically validate the effectiveness of particular advocacy strategies or whether all competencies and steps need to be utilized for every technique. In addition, these articles do not address how counselors are learning to utilize advocacy strategies. Moreover, this researcher could find no counselor education curriculum standards that require programs to teach counselors how to execute or employ these techniques nor the benefits and pitfalls of performing these particular techniques.
Empirical research

In addition to the medley of advocacy pieces listed above, empirical research suggests a set of themes within the advocacy literature. This section will highlight how the evidence supports education and training, qualities and skills, and a solidified professional identity influenced advocacy efforts. The conclusion of this section will detail how these components have been shown to intensify advocacy endeavors.

The effects of education and advocacy training on advocacy

In the early 1980’s, counseling literature had a surge of articles emphasizing that counselors needed to be knowledgeable about how political action, a method of professional advocacy, is needed to advance the profession (Edwin, 1982; Eddy, Richardson, and Erpenbach, 1982; Haight, 1982). Despite the call for awareness, these articles did not demonstrate how counselors were to obtain this enlightenment. Although there is no empirically validated research on how counselors are trained to be advocates or how effective advocacy training is on advocacy efforts, there is limited research on advocacy training in other professions, all of which find that education and training positively affect advocacy efforts. For example, Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) surveyed 85 social work students during the first month of their graduate training program and resurveyed 52, of the initial 85, students during the last month of their training. Each participant completed four instruments to measure their perception about empowerment of self, commitment to client empowerment, locus of control, and belief in
a just world. The researchers found that entering social work students felt empowered, were committed to empowering clients through advocacy, had an internal local of control, and were not sure if the world was just. They also found that the student’s level of empowerment and commitment to client empowerment increased during the completion of their graduate training. Furthermore, Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) found that the student’s local of control and belief in a just world remained the same.

Although Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) found that certain measures, empowerment and commitment, were affected by an increase in education they also found no change in other variables. Another critique of this research is the variation in the number of original participants verses the number of students who participated at the termination of the study. There is no way of knowing how the missing 33 students would have scored on the measures being utilized in this study. Additionally, although these instruments were intended to assist the research in understanding more about the participant’s advocacy, they were not instruments designed to measure advocacy specifically. There are no instruments to test advocacy thus there is no way to know how these instruments relate to the students advocacy beliefs and/or activities. Moreover, the participants chosen were from only one social work program. The research results may have been affected by test retest bias.

Moore Caira et al. (2003) described how a New Jersey public health organization constructed an advocacy training program to encourage public health professionals to partake in advocacy for their profession. The goal of this training was to provide health professionals with “knowledge and competence in basic advocacy principles and
motivation to make advocacy an ongoing component of their professional activities” (p. 304). The article discussed a detailed synopsis of how the advocacy training transpired. For example, “the day began with an overview of key principles of advocacy using a general approach…” (Moore Caira et al., p. 305). The detailed overview broke the training into several parts including 1.) amplifying our voices: training for public health advocacy part one and two, and 2.) advocacy and you: perfect together, and 3.) public health advocacy dialogue. The authors concluded that numerous advocacy trainings increased participants’ knowledge of advocacy, increased belief in the importance and benefits of advocacy, and increased advocacy efforts. Moreover, it was found that participants who had additional training participated in higher levels of advocacy, suggesting that education and training impact not only the amount of advocacy but also the type. Moore Caira et al. offered limited information about the justification for the elements used in the training; they gave no information about the participants, time or location of the training, the credentials of the trainers, etc. Moreover, the effectiveness of the training was determined by the self-report of the participants. The empirical nature of this study was minimal at best.

The only article about the effectiveness of advocacy training in the counseling literature was about school counselors. Field and Baker (2004) interviewed nine school counselors who worked in two different high schools within the same county. Two focus groups were asked the same six questions. Because this research used phenomenological methodology the researchers transcribed the interviews and analyzed the information by deducing it to major themes. The themes identified were advocacy definition, advocacy meaning, important advocacy behaviors, evidence of valuing advocacy in practice,
learning to be an advocate, and environmental issues for advocates. Within these themes, Field and Baker (2004) identified how counselors learn to advocate. In addition, they found that counseling skills strengthened one’s ability to advocate. This research indicated that school counselor-advocates use many counseling skills when advocating. They reported that it is important to be flexible, have realistic expectations, and be able to work with different people in different situations. In addition, they reported that they need to be accepting of others and be aware of their own values. School counselors indicated that they know their advocacy efforts are valued due to the feedback received by clients and administrators in their schools. Field and Baker (2004) concluded that counselors learn about advocacy in numerous ways including formal training, informal training, and through trial and error. Some participants also reported that they believed that some counselor-advocates do not learn about advocacy instead they have an innate personality trait that leads them to advocate. Finally, Field and Baker (2004) found that environmental obstacles include being undervalued, having a vague job description, and a lack in communication prohibit counselor from advocating. Participants reported that an increase in environmental support and establishing professional boundaries strengthen their ability to advocate for students.

Despite the rich findings of Field and Bakers (2004) work, this research only gives information about school counselors. It does not give any information on the experience of counselors who advocate for the counseling profession. In addition, this research was the result of only nine school counselors, all residing in the same county. It can be understood that school counselors share similarities and experiences, but that is not to say that they do not have vast differences depending on a variety of factors (school
district, personal characteristics, geographical location, student population, etc).

Additional information on this topic with a more diverse population is required before these results can be generalized. Moreover, this data is the result of participant self report. It is fair to presume that counselors may report more favorably about advocacy due to the emphasis of the need for advocacy, especially within the school counseling literature.

There is minimal research on how counselor-advocates learn to incorporate advocacy strategies and what effect the training has, if any, on advocacy efforts. Despite there being limited information about how counselors are trained to advocate, there is literature about how counseling techniques and skills taught in counselor education programs assist counselors in advocacy efforts.

Counseling techniques, skills, and qualities utilized in advocacy

The research discussed previously addressed advocacy training in counseling and other helping professions. Articles that discuss how advocates utilize counseling skills and techniques in their advocacy efforts are also available in counseling literature. For example, Earle (1990) examined the use of advocates in helping teen parents stay in school. This research highlighted the qualities of an advocate. The researcher reported that counselor-advocates described having nonjudgmental attitudes, patience and belief with students, visibility, and negotiation and communications skills as “the key to their success” in the advocacy project (Earle, 1990, p. 22).

As mentioned in the previous section, the qualitative studies conducted by Field and Baker (2004) and Eriksen (1999) discussed skills and qualities identified by
counselor-advocates. Each of their articles mentioned many themes discussed in this literature review. To reduce the redundancy the details of their articles will not be reiterated but the findings are significant enough to be mentioned in both subsections of this review.

Field and Baker (2004) focused on school counselors advocating for clients. Their study gave insight on how school counselors define advocacy and advocacy behaviors, how they found value in advocacy, how they learned to advocate, and environmental issues that affected advocacy efforts. Field and Baker (2004) claimed that successful counselor-advocates have active helping styles, the ability to work outside the box, an external focus, and the belief that change can occur. Several of the participants in Field and Baker’s (2004) study also reported that counselor-advocates need to be flexible and able to work with individuals from differing backgrounds. Additionally, Field and Baker (2004) emphasized accepting others, being aware of one’s own values, and having realistic expectations as important characteristics of an advocate. Moreover, they reported that counselors learned about advocacy by obtaining formal education, observing colleagues participate in advocacy, and through trial and error. Field and Baker’s (2004) findings about counselor-advocates reiterated the connection between the skills learned during counselor development and advocacy skills in addition to the connection between education/training and advocacy.

As mentioned in the previous section Eriksen (1999) interviewed leaders in the counseling field and found that there are two key elements to advocacy, the need for advocates to use their counseling skills, values, and personality, and the need for a strong counselor identity. Eriksen (1999) affirmed that successful advocates use counseling
skills such as relationship building, problem reframing, gathering information, communicating, and active listening skills when advocating.

In addition to the two empirical pieces previously discussed there are additional theoretical that are noteworthy to include. In theoretical pieces Erien (2006) and Trusty and Brown (2005) described the role of an advocate. They referred to advocates as mediators and negotiators, persons who can arbitrate and resolve differences. Moreover they emphasized that advocates need to have excellent communication skills, self awareness, the ability to be flexible, and knowledge of resources. Additionally, counselor advocates need to have a multisystem perspective and be able to utilize a variety of interventions and techniques (Kiselica and Robinson, 2001; Trusty and Brown). In the theoretical piece written by Kurpius and Rozechi (1992) they added identifying levels of need, attending, clarifying, reflecting, paraphrasing, confrontation and questioning to the list of skills and techniques needed to become an effective advocate. Witmer and Carter Mague (1982) wrote a theoretical piece about how counselors can initiate change through legislative advocacy. In this article they stated that advocates who want to influence legislation must have knowledge, commitment, leadership skills, organizational abilities, proficient communication, strong relationships, and the ability to collaborate with others.

All of the skills mentioned by the proceeding authors are central to counseling and are learned during counselor development, again linking advocacy to counselor development and training/education. As counselors develop in their training programs they acquire techniques and skills but most of all they gain a sense of professional identity.
The importance of counselor identity on advocacy

In addition to education and counseling skills, the advocacy literature revealed that counselor-advocates should have a strong professional identity as a counselor. Eriksen (1999) and Myers and Sweeney (2004) interviewed leaders, whom were deemed advocates in the counseling field, to gain insight about their outlook on advocacy. In Eriksen’s (1999) study she assessed the essential elements of advocacy, the advocacy steps, advocacy activities, and targets of advocacy. She concluded that one of the essential elements of successful advocacy is having a solidified professional identity. Myers and Sweeney’s research built on the connection between advocacy and professional identity by researching professional organizations’ stands on advocacy. In this research they found that advocacy is important for unity within the profession and is central to the development of the counseling profession (Myers and Sweeney). The researchers found that leaders believe that advocacy is important to the counseling profession for numerous reasons, including improving public image of counselors, financial parity, job security, and unity within the profession. Myers and Sweeney also assessed advocacy resources available to leaders, obstacles experienced by the leaders, and the perceived importance of advocacy.

Conceptual pieces also emphasize the importance of identity for counselor advocates. In a 2002 conceptual piece Myers, Sweeney, and White stated that having a secure professional identity is an important step in becoming a counselor-advocate. The connection between advocacy and professional identity was also explicitly recognized by Hill, Bandfield, and White (2007). In a theoretical article they stated that as counselors
learn the ‘tricks of the trade’, their professional identity develops. Identity development starts as counseling students enter graduate training programs and continues to solidify throughout counselors’ professional lives (Hill, Bandfield and White). The quote below, by Hill, Bandfield, and White, epitomizes how identity development is an element of advocacy.

Students start to think about their place within the profession and compare themselves to other mental health professionals. They learn that counselors work from a wellness model, believe in a developmental perspective, and practice prevention and early intervention (Remley and Herlihy, 2001). Eventually, the student’s repertoire expands and they begin to develop a more profound identity, their specialty. Hopefully the students realize that although counseling is a “new” mental health profession with several specialty areas, they can still take pride in their core counseling identity. As their identity solidifies, graduate students eventually develop a sense of professionalism, “internalized attitudes, perspectives and personal commitment to the standards, ideals and identity of a profession” (Spruell and Benshoff, 1996). They also begin realizing that they affect the field on a professional level. Students recognize that they can impact the profession through leadership and impact the world through advocacy. (p. 10)

In essence, it is believed that cultivating the ability to advocate is a developmental process that has several components, including professional identity.

Overall the advocacy literature is disparate. There is no underlying theoretical framework to ground the research being conducted. There are select implications that identity development components such as education and training, skills and qualities, and professional identity, affect counselor advocacy efforts. No research has been conducted on whether these elements impact advocacy for the counseling profession. Moreover, no research explores who advocates for the profession or how these counselors developed into counselor-advocates. In addition to my interest in the topic and my personal experience as an advocate, the gap in the literature has motivated the research question of “how do counselors develop into advocates for the counseling profession?”
Although there is a significant amount of literature on social justice advocacy or client level advocacy, the research on professional advocacy is limited. What literature does exist reveals general information about advocacy and suggests some trends that may affect advocacy at the professional level. One of the recent trends in advocacy literature is the focus on the importance of education (Moore Caira et al. 2003; Van Soest 1996; Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter, 2006; Field and Baker, 2004) on advocacy efforts. A second theme that occurs in the literature is the emphasis on the utilization of counseling techniques and skills (Field and Baker; Earle, 1990; Eriksen, 1999; Trusty and Brown, 2004; Witmer and Carter Mague, 1982) by successful advocates. The third trend in advocacy literature is the focus on the importance of professional identity on advocacy (Eriksen, 1999; Myers and Sweeney, 2004; Myers, Sweeney and White, 2002; Hill, Bandfield and White, 2007). Despite the obvious themes that occur in counseling literature, no research has been conducted on how these elements affect counselors or how counselors develop into counselor-advocates or their professional advocacy efforts.

To learn to be an advocate a counselor’s education and training facilitate the process. Counselors learn basic skills and techniques as their education increases; in addition counselors develop a professional identity. My critique is that the research stops there, yet other authors write about the steps, techniques, and competencies without linking the overall conceptual model to the training, identity, or counselor development.

The advocacy themes will guide this investigation of the process of becoming an advocate. Will advocates identify additional characteristics and factors that contributed to
their development from a counselor to a counselor-advocate? The researcher will examine this developmental process by conducting case studies of counselors who advocate for the counseling profession.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The counseling profession does not have adequate advocacy (Myers, Sweeney and White, 2002), and this shortcoming affects the advancement of the counseling profession which directly impinges on counselors by affecting their marketability, reimbursement, and status in the mental health field. Additionally, the counseling profession is unaware of who advocates for the profession or how these professionals became advocates. This has led the profession to push advocacy responsibilities on all counselors unaware of the factors or characteristics that contribute to becoming an advocate. The general research question that will be examined in this study is as follows “how do counselors develop into advocates for the counseling profession”.

This case study was designed to examine how counselors develop into advocates for the profession. Investigating this process provides the profession with an understanding of how counselors become counselor-advocates. Understanding this process allows professionals to know more about incorporating advocacy training into counselor education programs via curriculum changes or experiential learning.
Appropriateness of qualitative research for this study

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that qualitative research does not focus on statistics, numbers, and outcomes. On the contrary, qualitative research focuses on personal contact with participants; it spotlights the experience and process of each participant. Murray (2003) stated that a “qualitative researcher views social phenomena holistically” (p. 182). Choosing to use a qualitative method for research may occur for numerous reasons. One rationale is the nature of the research problems and questions (Strauss and Corbin, 1988). Another reason for using qualitative methodology is when areas are studied in which little information is known or little empirical research has been conducted on the research area of interest. The third reason listed by Strauss and Corbin is that the experience being explored is a process.

This research set out to explore how counselors develop into advocates for the counseling profession. Qualitative methodology was appropriate for this research study because it involved understanding the counselors’ experiences and processes as they developed into advocates. Additionally, although several trends and themes occur in the advocacy literature, no research has been conducted on how counselors become advocates for the profession. This gap in the literature led to an exploratory case study on counselor-advocates to discover details about their experience of becoming an advocate for the counseling profession. Moreover, using qualitative methods helped to understand the occurrence from multiple perspectives, helping to develop a more in-depth understanding of the experience.
Appropriateness of case study research for this study

Creswell (2003) stated that case studies should be used when the researcher is exploring the process of a particular event or activity. Van Wynsberghe and Khan (2007) gave an overview of how a case study has been defined by education and social science researchers. Overall, they reported that a case study is a way for researchers to approach an issue and understand complex phenomena. Moreover, they stated that a case study “employs analytic induction to discover or ‘find out’ the essence of the case” (Van Wynsberghe and Khan, 2007, p. 2). Van Wynsbergh and Khan offered a prototype for case study research. They stated that case study research has seven features including: having a small sample size, producing a detailed contextual analysis, containing a limited control and intervention from the researcher, allowing researchers to generate hypotheses and lessons learned, utilizing multiple data sources, and offering extendibility to the reader of the research.

Case study was used in this research to gain a rich description of the process of becoming a counselor-advocate rather than a cause and effect; each case was examined as a process rather than a fixed instance. Murray (2003) reported that “the greatest advantage of a case study is that it permits a researcher to reveal the way a multiplicity of factors have interacted to produce the unique character of the entity that is the subject of the research” (p. 35). This research sought to understand the factors or variables that lead a counselor into becoming an advocate.

Case study design was appropriate for this study because it also permitted me to obtain the participants’ subjective experiences, opinions, and viewpoints. To learn about
professional encounters, it was necessary to obtain information from the individuals who have lived the experience and have an understanding of the process. Case study method was used to insure that rich, detailed data was generated and served as a vehicle for better understanding.

Sampling, Procedures, and Strategies

A purposeful and convenience sample of counselor advocates was used in this research. Having participants who have advocacy training and experiences shed the most light into the phenomenon being studied. When trying to understand how people come to advocacy in the profession, it made sense to study those who have moved into advocacy. It was also a convenience sample because I interviewed counselors who responded to the request for participants and who are located near me geographically.

The sample was homogeneous with regard to occupation and geographical location. This sample was homogeneous because I only sought the experiences of professional counselors. Due to the regional location of the researcher, participants were geographically close to the Great Lakes region.

To assist with this sampling procedure, I utilized a list of the American Counseling Association (ACA) Legislative Institute attendees from 2007 and a list of the State Legislative Institute training attendees from 2008. It can be assumed that counselors attending a training institute that specializes in professional advocacy have interest and experience in professional advocacy. The lists of attendees were used because all attendees have participated in an intensive professional advocacy training session.
Because lobbying visits with congressional/state leaders are a component of the training, it was known that counselors who have attended these training sessions also have hands-on experience advocating at the state and/or national level. Furthermore, ACA assures that attendees are advocates by stating that its trainings “prepare attendees to become effective legislative advocates for the counseling profession and its clients at the state and federal level” (American Counseling Association, 2009).

I used the list that I obtained the year that I attended the ACA’s Legislative Institute and I contacted the director of the state legislative training seminars to obtain a list of state attendees. I added the names of the chosen Great Lake State residents from the ACA Legislative Institute to the list of State Legislative Institute attendees. Using the combined list of ACA Legislative Institute and State Legislative Institute attendees, every tenth attendee was sent an email (Appendix B). If the attendee did not respond within one week, a reminder was sent. If the attendee did not respond within two weeks from the date requested on the initial email, the next tenth participant from the original list was selected. This process was followed until eight counselor-advocates volunteered to participate.

Each potential participant was contacted via email. The initial email explained the research specifics (Appendix B). A copy of the informed consent and the demographic questionnaire was attached to the initial e-mail as well. Interested participants were asked to email me with contact information in order to set up the interview. Locations were chosen to enable face-to-face interviews at a site that was convenient for the participant. I recommended that the meeting location insure privacy and was quiet for
example, the library, local university, or their home. Despite recommendations, several of the participants chose a public restaurant.

Participants

Participants were advocates in a Great Lake state, who had attended the ACA Legislative Institute and/or the State Legislative Institute. The participants were willing to speak freely with me about their experiences in becoming an advocate for the counseling profession. They agreed to participate in an audio recorded interview session. As a professional advocate at the state level and being an attendee of the 2007 ACA Legislative Institute, it was assumed that I would conduct some level of backyard research. This assumption was correct. Glesne (2006) reported that there are implications to conducting research with people with whom you have previous experience. Glesne reports that backyard researchers set up expectations for particular interactions and enter into dual relationships with participants. To reduce some of the dual relationship dynamics in my data collection, I went through the list of participants prior to sending out email and I deleted the participants with whom I have a personal relationship. Due to my interaction in the counseling field, I knew many people on the participant list. I decided to leave participants on the list with whom I had minimal professional contact. In addition to the cautions, Glesne stated that there are also benefits to conducting backyard research. Backyard research allows the researcher to gain easy access to participants. In addition, it permits the researcher to interview participants with whom they have already established rapport. I had met five of the participants prior to conducting their interviews.
I did not have a personal relationship with any of the participants. Two of the participants attended the ACA Legislative Institute with me in 2007 thus I met them on one previous occasion. Another four participants have been involved in professional organizations in which I am affiliated. Two participants I had never met previously.

The number of participants used in qualitative research varies (Creswell, 1998; Morrow, 2005; Seidman, 1998). Quantitative research focuses on quantity whereas qualitative research emphasizes the quality of the data collected, thus the number of participants is less important than the quality of information retrieved from the participants. Creswell recommended the use of approximately ten participants in qualitative research before saturation occurs. Shank (2006) stated that saturation is “a common guideline in qualitative research” (p.31). Saturation is reached when the researcher witnesses pattern replication. In this research study the point of saturation occurred after eight participants were interviewed.

The final sample included eight counselor advocates. Each participant partook in a guided interview. The interviews ranged in length depending on the amount of information that the participant shared. The shortest interview lasted twenty-three minutes and the longest interview lasted sixty-eight minutes. The interviews took place in a variety of locations. Three interviews took place at restaurants, two took place in the participant’s home, one in a college cafeteria, one at a bookstore, and one at the participant’s place of employment.

I interviewed seven females and one male ranging in age from 27 years old to 59 years old. Seven of the participants identified as Caucasian and one identified as biracial, black and white. Five of the eight participants had received their master’s degree. Three
of those five were newly licensed. Two participants were in a counselor education and supervision doctoral program. The final participant had received a PhD and was working in academia. All participants identified as community/mental health counselors. In addition, two participants identified as school counselors and three participants identified as Counselor Educators. The participants’ income ranges from under 20,000 to over 100,000. It should be noted that the demographic questionnaire only asked for income. I can only infer from the amounts listed that participants may have listed their household income rather than individual income. All participants were licensed as counselors in the state in which they live. They also all belong to at least one professional organization. Several participants belonged to as many as ten professional organizations. Basic demographic information is included in the table 1. Additional information will be shared in chapter four describing each of the participants in more depth. Throughout this entire document pseudonyms are used to give participants anonymity and protect their confidentiality.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>License/certif</th>
<th>Clinical exp.</th>
<th>Edu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Tami</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>LPCCS</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>LPC, CSC, NCC</td>
<td>Prac/intern</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>29</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>91-100</td>
<td>LPC</td>
<td>Prac/intern</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>59</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>91-100</td>
<td>LPCCS</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>29</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>91-100</td>
<td>LPC, Cert. Family Life Edu</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
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<td>Amanda</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>81-90</td>
<td>LPC</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>In PhD program ABD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Biracial bl and wh</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>&lt; 20</td>
<td>LPC</td>
<td>0-3</td>
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<td>LPCCS, NCC, LSC</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethics

To ensure ethical research the research proposal was submitted for approval to my dissertation committee and The University of Akron’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection (Appendix E). I consulted with my dissertation chair and qualitative methodologist for the duration of the data collection and analysis. An informed consent document, which was congruent with university IRB requirements, was signed by each participant prior to the individual interview (Appendix A). The informed consent form notified the participants in writing of the conditions of the interview (length, purpose, recording procedures, etc.), that the research was voluntary, there were no risks to participating and that the participant could withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. Ensuring confidentiality with an informed consent reduces suspicion and promotes truthful responses from participants.

Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. Recordings were downloaded onto a password safe, personal laptop computer, which was stored at my home. After the information was downloaded it was saved on CD for future data analysis. Once the data was saved to a CD, the original recordings were deleted from the recording device and from the computer. The CDs and recording equipment were stored in a secure locked filing cabinet at my home. All research data including, but not limited to, informed consent, notes, code lists, and transcripts were stored in the same secure locked filing cabinet at my home. Participants’ information was also protected because they were referred to by a pseudonym in the data analysis and in all and any presentation and/or publication of the research.
Data Collection Procedures and Techniques

I employed two data collection methods: interviewing and document collection. This section will give details about the data collection process of this research, including interviews, notes, and documentation.

Interviewing

Stake (1995) identified three types of case studies including: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. Of the types of case studies discussed by Stake this research study utilized the collective case study, which gained insight into a phenomenon by looking at multiple cases. Using case study allows for the researcher to look at process and the outcome of the data (Padgett, 2008). Using multiple cases allowed for me to conduct individual and cross case analysis. “A case is unpacked and its contents closely examined, but the parts are ultimately viewed as a whole and in relation to one another” (Padgett, 2008, p. 144).

Several specifications about the interview process were established to ensure that rich, detailed data was gathered from each interviewee. There are several ways to conduct an interview: phone, email, and face-to-face; each having advantages and disadvantages. I conducted face-to-face interviews with each of the participants. The advantage of a face-to-face interview is that the human contact initiates a personal relationship between the researcher and the participant which is effective in eliciting sincere participation (Murray, 2003). The fact that I too am an advocate may have assisted me in building
rapport and trust with the participants. Personal interviews also allow for greater flexibility and permit easy elaboration. The interviews were viewed as a conversation with the purpose of gaining information about a process that the participant has experienced.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face, each interview between twenty-three and sixty-eight minutes. Each interview was recorded with a digital recorder and listened to within twenty-four hours of the interview. The interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview was conducted. Morrow (2005) reported that “data analysis, interpretation, and writing are a continuous and interactive process, often leading the investigator back into the field for additional data” (p. 256).

Murray (2003) listed four “typical procedures” to interviewing, including loose-questions, tight-questions, converging-questions and response-guided questions. For the purpose of organization, analysis, and flexibility in interviewing I chose to use response-guided interview questions in this research study. The interviews took a semi-structured, response-guided approach which included open-ended questions. Having a question guide (appendix C) assured I would address all areas of interest. The question guide assisted in organizing the data and ensured that all participants were asked the same questions, this assisted with comparative analysis. Asking open-ended response-guided questions allowed the participant to answer the question in a manner that expressed their individualized experiences.

The topic of the interviews was the process of becoming an advocate for the counseling profession. Questions about the counselor’s journey reflected the themes of education, training, counseling skills, and professional identity which are outlined in the
counseling literature about advocacy. The questions investigated the participants’ perceptions of their personal and professional progress toward becoming an advocate for the counseling profession. Other interview topics included factors that may have initiated advocacy, the amount and types of professional advocacy efforts, and the role the interviewee’s professional development and identity have played in professional advocacy efforts. Using the response-guided approach I began each interview with prepared questions and then asked logical follow-up questions for clarity, as suggested by Murray (2003).

Questions were developed using numerous techniques including executing an exhaustive literature review, drawing on my personal experiences, conducting a mock interview with subject matter experts/pseudo participants, as well as consulting with a qualitative methodologist. Initial questions were developed as a result of the content found in the literature search and were based on my personal journey toward becoming an advocate for the profession. Questions were created that reflected the trends emerging in the literature including; education and training, skills and qualities, and professional identity. For example, question number one on the interview protocol was designed because there is not a consensus on how to define professional advocacy within the advocacy literature. My personal experiences were also reflected in questions. For example, question number seven asked “have you ever taken time out from advocacy” because I had taken a break from advocacy due to some professional obstacles that occurred during a previous advocacy endeavor.

In an effort to confirm that the interview questions were easily understood and that they would lead to information regarding the process of becoming an advocate I
conducted two mock interviews, each with different colleagues. It should be noted that
both colleagues have recently received their doctorate in Counselor Education and
Supervision, have been trained in qualitative research and data collection methods, and
have experience in advocacy. The colleagues participating in the mock interview process
assessed the literal and pragmatic meaning of each question. Prior to the mock interview,
I informed my colleagues that the questions should incorporate the four maxims
discussed by Schwarz (1999). The questions should allow the interviewee to contribute
relevant information to the conversation, provide a quantity of information, supply
information that is clear and interpretable, and present information that is true and
evidenced by fact and personal experience. After each mock interview, I discussed the
interview questions with my colleagues. Based on their responses, I modified the
interview protocol (Appendix C). For example, both participants indicated that in their
experience mentorship effected their becoming an advocate. This change inspired
questions number two and five on the interview protocol. Their responses also assisted in
clarifying questions and making them more relevant to the research. Through discussion
with colleagues I reflected on my personal interview techniques and opportunities for
improvement. Thus, the pilots of the interview provided valuable information about both
the process of the interview and the interview protocol being used.

Field Notes

In addition to recording the interview participants, I also manually recorded notes
during and after the interviews. Notes are another form of data that can serve as
description and reflection on the interview, as well as a place for analytic and personal notes on the data. I utilized three types of notes: descriptive, analytical, and personal. The descriptive notes detailed what was observed during the interview, also referred to as observational notes. These notes give information about the interview site and observations of the participants. They were recorded during and after the interview. The analytic notes included questions that arose during the note taking process or during the initial review of the recording. These notes reminded me to return to a topic being discussed, so as not to interrupt the interviewee. The analytic notes also represented initial thoughts and interpretations about the interview. The personal notes allowed me to express what I was thinking during the research process.

The three types of field notes were all transcribed separately from the transcription of the interview recordings. All transcribed documents were identified as either interviews or descriptive, analytical or personal notes. For example analytic notes may be bold font; whereas descriptive notes are italicized font, and personal notes are underlined. I documented the tone, excitement, pauses, and other conversation inflections included in the personal interviews.

Additional documentation

I requested that each participant email me their curriculum vita. Having the vita allowed for written evidence of the participant’s professional demographic characteristics such as education level, professional memberships, and licensure and certification status. This information was used as a cross reference for the demographic questionnaire. In
addition, each participant was encouraged to provide any evidence of their advocacy efforts for the counseling profession. Such information might include: presentations about advocacy, articles written about advocacy, curriculum of advocacy courses taught, and correspondence with legislators. This evidence was utilized to verify and crosscheck the information discussed during interviews.

Demographic questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire was collected from each participant. The demographic questionnaire asked participants to identify questions such as age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status, in addition to questions about professional involvement such as licensure, certification, years of professional experience, etc. (Appendix D). This information was obtained to give the readers of the research an understanding of the sample used in this study.

Data Analysis

Glesne (2006) stated that “the art of data transformation is in combining the more mundane organizational tasks with insight and thoughtful interpretations” (p. 154). Transforming text into interpretations requires full emergence into the data and careful analysis to give the text a voice. Data analysis occurs in many reoccurring steps due to its cyclical nature. Creswell (2003) discusses a generic data analysis process but emphasizes that researchers need to individualize the analysis process to align with their design.
Steps of analysis

I began by listening to the recordings. Each recording was listened to multiple times in order for me to become immersed in the data. As I transcribed the interviews, ideas emerged and questions arose which comprised the analytic notes. After transcribing all the interviews, the interviews were listened to once more to ensure that they were transcribed accurately. After double checking the transcriptions, I read the data to obtain a general sense of the information.

Coding data can be summarized as arranging data into labeled categories. I used a combination of inductive and deductive approaches to data analysis. Deductive analysis allowed me to create an *a priori* code list that reflected the literature and my professional experience and was also attentive to my research questions.

Deductive codes included professional identity, counseling skills, and level of education. I also utilized inductive analysis which permitted the information to be categorized. As emergent codes were identified the code list was revised based on multiple reviews of the transcripts of the interviews and the descriptive, analytic, and personal notes. The revised codes were also the result of blending, deleting, and renaming the previous code lists. Every code was operationalized, defined, and bounded. Each time the code list was revised, I documented a rationale for the revisions in an effort to audit the coding and analysis process. This coding process was implemented to label, manipulate, and reduce the data. During this coding process like statements were given a name or code.
After reviewing each line, sentence, and paragraph, patterns emerged from the coded data and were “clumped” into logical headings or themes. These patterns were further deduced to a concise listing of themes. According to Attride-Stirling (2001) themes can be categorized into three categories: basic, organizational, and global. Basic themes will be found by looking at the data, themes that are obvious at first glance. Organizational themes organize basic themes into clusters. These clusters will result from combining several of the basic themes into more generalized themes. The themes that connect the organizational themes are global themes. This is the most general level of themes, a combination of the themes that are interrelated.

I engaged in the analysis of coding and theme structures searching for gaps, wholes, holes, and patterns in the codes. I utilized insight and advocacy knowledge to recognize the patterns that emerged into the major themes. The major themes identified were supported by quotations directly from several participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2003). The participants’ quotes illustrate the connection to the themes for the reader.

After the data was analyzed and verified for accuracy a final description was shared with each participant. This summary was emailed to the participants and they were asked to respond to the validity of the summary in relationship to their personal experience. If the participants responded to the summary description, the information that they shared was included in the discussion of the data.
Data Management

The first step to organize the information was by assigning each participant a pseudonym that was used in all references, on all files and in all published and presented materials. A master list of all participants with pseudonyms has been kept in a locked filing cabinet. That locked filing cabinet contains a separate file of each participant’s information, labeled with the pseudonym. Each file contains the transcript of the interview, the field notes conducted about the participant, and any additional documentation related to that particular participant including informed consent, documentation, curriculum vita, email correspondence, and a copy of the interview on CD. Additional documentation of a generic nature was kept in a separate file including each round of coding and each revision of the code list. I kept a field note book that included all the transcripts, field notes, and all other correspondence with participants. All information in the field book was arranged to protect the participants’ confidentiality. For example, email correspondence were cut and pasted into a document to protect the sender’s information. Keeping this detailed log assisted in tracking my thought process about the analysis process. This information has been kept in a generic (not specific to a participant) file along with an audit trial of what processes are being complete and the time length that each step takes.

All research information will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in for three years. This time length was chosen due to university and federal regulations. In addition, the ACA Code of Ethics reports that “Counselors are obligated to make available sufficient original research data to qualified professionals who may wish to replicate the
study” (American Counseling Association, 2009, p. 18). It also reports that “Within a reasonable period of time following the completion of a research project or study, counselors take steps to destroy records or documents (audio, video, digital, and written) containing confidential data or information that identifies research participants” (American Counseling Association, 2009, p. 17). After the three years all data related to this research study will be shredded.

Subjectivity

Although objectivity is desired in quantitative research, subjectivity is essential in qualitative research (Morrow, 2005). In case study research the researcher is attempting to obtain the participant’s subjective view of something. Subjectivity is present in qualitative research due to the researcher. In qualitative research the researchers are often personally invested in the topic and often interconnected with their participants. This intimate relationship inevitably comes into play, intentionally and/or unintentionally. When discussing how one’s personal qualities can affect research, Peshkin (1988) reported that “These qualities have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement” (p. 17). The fact that the researcher’s subjectivity affects the research means the investigator is compelled to be mindful and monitor his or her subjectivity. Peshkin phrased it appropriately when he emphasized the importance of researcher mindfulness. He stated that “untamed subjectivity mutes the emic voice” (Peshkin, 1988, p.21). Creswell (2003) stated that being the primary data collection
instrument, the researcher must identify personal beliefs, values, and preconceived notions at the onset of the research. Having a verbatim transcript of the interview will decrease the role that subjectivity plays in data collection but I will monitor my bias during the data analysis stage of research.

Being aware of personal experiences, I had to filter bias in several ways including taking notes about my thoughts and feelings before, during, and after the data collection and analysis process. The journal was a place for me to reflect on my personal feelings and insights. This bracketing process made the experiences more salient and observable. Journaling during the data collection process helped monitor how my personal experiences shaped the data. Acknowledging personal experiences helped me in being mindful of personal biases. Distinguishing these connections also may help the reader by making them aware of my experiences and the lenses that the data is reviewed through.

Introduction to the researcher

I have a Bachelor degree in Psychology, a Masters of Science degree in Mental Health Counseling and I am currently a student in a Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral program. Events, which occurred during my high school years, spawned my initial interest in counseling. Walking the halls of high school, I observed students trying to cope with interpersonal issues in an unsuccessful manner. I observed girls purging in the bathrooms as boys instigated fights as a method to gain the feeling of control. During my junior and senior year I was asked to be a volunteer at a self-esteem workshop. The workshop was designed to assist fourth graders with esteem related
issues. This gave me the opportunity to work with young children and to gain insight on problems that were occurring in their everyday lives. I was also selected to be an office aid for our school’s guidance counselor my senior year. This shadowing experience gave me the opportunity to do peer counseling. These experiences sparked my interest so much that I chose to pursue psychology as my undergraduate major.

As an undergraduate, I partook in internship experiences at a correctional facility and a juvenile residential treatment center. I began to realize that I was drawn to interacting with these clients on a one-on-one basis. I saw that despite their criminal status, they had a story which was shaped by how they coped with life stressors. I learned that many of their concerns could have been lessened or eliminated with counseling. This awareness led me to pursue a master’s degree in mental health counseling.

Counseling coursework has enlightened me with intellectual and personal growth. The more I learned, the more I realized that my experience in the education arena was not complete thus I entered a Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral program. I aspired to further my education for several reasons. First, I intended on becoming a more skillful counselor. Second, I desired to obtain the knowledge and ability to work in an academic venue. Third, I realized that supervisors are often the most valuable advocates for clients; thus to truly aid consumers, the most effective way to assist them is indirectly. Overall my commitment to helping others began when I was an adolescent and has matured with education and experience. What started as desire to help others is ending in a passionate career dedicated to counseling and advocacy.

I am a licensed professional counselor in the state of Ohio and I am a Nationally Certified Counselor. I have also recently applied for my Chemical Dependency
Counselor Assistant Certification. I am a member of 12 professional organizations and I attend yearly counseling conferences, seminars, and trainings at the local, state, and national levels. I also attended the 2007 American Counseling Association’s Legislative Institute, an annual learning institute teaching counselors about professional advocacy. I have held many leadership positions in professional organizations including an advocacy chair for Chi Sigma Iota Alpha Upsilon, a counseling honor society. I am a member of the ACA Public Awareness Support Committee, the Women’s Interest Network, and the Advocacy Interest Network. I have written numerous articles for professional newsletters about professional advocacy and presented about advocacy at professional conferences. In addition, I advocate for the counseling profession regularly.

The more I develop professionally and learn about advocacy, the more I feel responsible to advocate for the counseling profession. Moreover, my experiences as an advocate have given me additional insight on how advocates mature over time. Having a range of advocacy experiences at different points in my career led me to question if other advocates have similar or diverse experiences. How did other advocates become advocates? Did their professional maturity affect their process as it did mine? These questions led me to this dissertation topic and my passion for greater understanding of professional advocacy in counseling.
Validity

Validity and reliability are imperative in any research because they ensure accuracy and truth. Maxwell (2005) refers to validity as the “correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation or other short account” (p.106). In qualitative research, validity and reliability are described using terms such as credibility, trustworthiness, transferability, and dependability (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Glense, 2006; Morrow, 2005; Seidman, 1998; Shank, 2006). Researchers assure that these standards are achieved by utilizing validity and reliability measures such as triangulation, negative case analysis, clarification of research bias, thick description of research, external audit, and respondent validation, (Creswell, 2003; Glesne; Maxwell; Morrow; Shank). This section describes how qualitative research defines validity and how I used particular measures to increase the validity and reliability of this research.

Morrow (2005) reported that credibility is equivalent to internal validity; she reported that researchers can achieve this internal validity by including thick descriptions of the data, conducting participant checks, and reflecting on the researcher’s reflexivity. Creswell (2003) describes rich, thick descriptions as the ability to “transport readers to the setting and give them an element of shared experience” (p.196). This can be accomplished by how the researcher illustrates the research during the writing process.

Member checking occurs when the researcher takes the final reports back to the participants to see if they feel the information is accurate. This allows the researcher to confirm their interpretations with the participants. Researcher reflexivity refers to the researcher’s influence on the interview participant. Maxwell (2005) reported that
reflexivity can not be eliminated in case study research, merely understood and acknowledged by the researcher.

Morrow (2005) also reported that external validity, or transferability, is attained when the reader is able to determine the generalizability of the information. Generalizability is determined differently in qualitative and quantitative research. In quantitative research generalizability, the amount of which the sample is representative of the larger population is determined by the number of participants and power. In qualitative work the notion of generalizability is coined as transferability. In qualitative research the reader determines the transferability of the research results. The reader will be able to determine this to a greater extent if the researcher provides detailed information about the process of data collection and analysis, sampling procedures and participants, participant-researcher relationships, and information about the researcher as an objective instrument. Transferability can be achieved when a detailed audit trail is maintained and disclosed in the writing of the research.

Morrow (2005) and Shank (2006) reported that dependability is the same as reliability. Reliability in qualitative research is achieved when the researcher tracks their design, process, data collection, and analysis. This information is provided in a detailed audit of the research, which can assist future research in recreating the researchers if desired.

Many theorists discuss methods for increasing validity and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2003; Glesne, 2006; Maxwell, 2005; Newman and Benz, 1998). Although there are slight differences, many of the procedures overlap. I took numerous steps mentioned in the literature to ensure validity of the research process including collecting
numerous forms of data, performing a negative case analysis, carrying out respondent validation, and producing a detailed audit trail.

According to Eisner (1998) the researcher must collect sufficient data to validate the findings. The design of this research increases validity by allowing me to collect an abundance of information from each participant, adding to the richness of the data. Supporting information such as the participants’ curriculum vita and one participant’s dissertation provided a well-rounded and accurate picture of the participants, thus providing greater breadth and thickness of the data.

Maxwell (2005) establishes triangulation, the “collection of information from a diverse range of individuals and settings using a variety of methods” (p. 112), as an excellent validity-testing strategy. Triangulation is often utilized to create and maintain rigor (Shank, 2006). It also assists the researcher in establishing credibility, and believability of the findings. I accumulated information in numerous ways including conducting interviews, collecting a questionnaire, and gathering additional documentation. Each of these pieces of data was used to increase the understanding of the phenomena being examined.

Each case was reviewed numerous times. I examined each case for common themes and then reexamined the cases for disconfirming evidence. This reexamination allowed me to conduct a negative case analysis, analysis of discrepant data. Creswell (2003) states that identifying discrepant information adds to the credibility of the research. I identified outlying data that did not seem to “fit” what previous research had indicated. I also explored information that was only prevalent in a minority of the cases. Negative case analysis added to the richness of the data because it allowed unexpected
emergent data to surface. Discrepant information is presented in chapter five which allows the readers to draw their own conclusions.

I conducted a respondent validation, the solicitation of feedback about the data from the participants, to ensure dependability. To assure accuracy and dependability, the participants were asked if the interpretation aligned with the information they disclosed during the interview. After the data were analyzed all participants were emailed a summary of their interview for participant verification. Each participant was given the opportunity to review the transcription. They were also encouraged to review the interview summary and provide feedback by rating how accurately they felt the content of the interview was conceptualized. They were asked to rate the information from one to ten (10 being completely accurate 1 being not at all accurate). In addition, the participants were encouraged to clarify any erroneous interpretations of the data and to add additional information, in hopes that the changes or additional information would add to the validity and depth of the data. Six participants responded to the participant validation email within two weeks of the email asking for feedback. The remaining two participants were resent the email asking for their feedback. Eventually all participants responded to the email. All participants reported that they thought the summary of information accurately captured their journey of becoming an advocate for the counseling profession. One participant did add one minor suggestion. He requested that I use a different adjective to describe opportunistic. This participant suggested, “rather than using the term ‘opportunism’, I believe that it would be more accurate to combine with phrase before it ....to see larger picture and identify opportunities”. Of the eight participants only three participants rated the response from one to ten as requested in the email. One participant
rated the synopsis a 9.5 out of 10 points, whereas the other two participants rated it as a nine.

I kept a detailed record of my data collection, analysis process, and procedures for auditing purposes. I documented in the journal the steps that I took during the entire research process as well as a timeline of how long each step took to complete. This audit will assists future researchers in replicating this study. Creating an audit trail of the “clear and constant path between the collection of the data and its use” will increase the dependability of the research (Shank, 2006; p.114). Identifying “the type and nature of the raw data, how the data was analyzed, and how categories and themes were formed” will also assist in establishing confirmability (Shank, 2006, p. 115).

Summary

The purpose of chapter three was to describe the qualitative methodology and analytic approaches that was used in the current research. This incorporates a detailed description of the epistemology of qualitative research including the case study approach being utilized to examine the process of becoming a counselor-advocate. Sampling procedures and strategies, participant information, ethical considerations, data collection procedures and techniques, data management, the role of subjectivity, and the validity measures were also addressed.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the results as they were interpreted by this researcher. The interpretative process is central during the data analysis stage of research. The patterns that were discerned during analysis process have been described to the participants prior to the writing of the results shared in this chapter. The goal of this research was to provide a description of the experience of how a counselor becomes an advocate for the counseling profession. There were prominent themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. Participant validation was utilized to confirm the interpretation of the results.

Introduction to the Participants

Below is information about each participant including the information about the interview and the demographic information about each person. The participants’ names have been changed to ensure confidentiality. This is a brief overview to give the reader a better description of each of the expert advocates interviewed in this research. Each
participant will be introduced in the order they were interviewed starting with demographic information and interview highlights.

Tami: participant #1

Tami’s interview was conducted at a national chain restaurant located at the half way point between the researcher and the participant’s home, a location which was suggested by the participant. The interview had to be interrupted on three brief occasions, one break for rain (we were seated outside initially), a recess for a bathroom break, and we needed to move away from other patrons to reduce background noise. Despite the interruptions, the interview was forty-six minutes in length and ran smoothly. Tami spoke at a very fast rate; thus, the information obtained in this interview was vast despite the length of the interview.

Tami is a 47 year-old white female. She has obtained her masters degree in community counseling and is currently earning between 51-60 thousand dollars annually. At the time of the interview she was in transition in her employment, recently changing jobs to a position in which she uses her counselor supervisor license. Tami reported having between 11-15 years experience in the counseling field.

Tami reported that she identifies as a community mental health counselor. She stated that she enjoys being active in her profession which is displayed by her membership and leadership positions in numerous counseling organizations. When asked to list adjectives that describe her personality Tami responded by stating that she is loyal, committed, kind, compassionate, and trustworthy.
Molly: participant #2

The interview with Molly was conducted in the cafeteria area in a small community college near the participant’s home. This interview took place at a small table during a period of when summer classes were not in session, which made the environment conducive to an interview. The interview lasted fifty-six minutes in length with two interruptions; the digital recorder ran out of batteries and when Molly asked for a break to compose her emotions.

Molly is a 44 year-old married white female. Molly reported that her family income is between 51-60 thousand dollars annually. At the time of the interview, Molly was unhappily unemployed. Molly described her frustration with her inability to obtain employment with sufficient compensation. Molly had spent time being a stay at home mother tending to her children, one of which has special needs.

Molly has recently graduated with a degree in school counseling. Once the participant realized the decrease in job opportunity, she continued to take courses and obtained her community counseling degree as well. She had recently completed her school counseling licensure exam and the exam for her state mental health licensure; thus, she identified as a school and community counselor.

During the interview Molly displayed her passion for people to be treated equally. At one point during the interview, Molly became overwhelmed with emotion and had to take a break to compose herself. On the demographic questionnaire, Molly described herself as friendly, open, understanding, studious, and serious.
Heather: participant #3

The youngest participant was Heather; she was a twenty-seven year old, single, biracial (black and white) female. Heather had the lowest income of all participants, which can be attributed to her being a full time single doctoral student.

During the interview Heather was a first year student in a Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral program. Heather worked part time as a contract therapist at a rural counseling agency as well as volunteered time as a researcher at a local hospital. In addition, Heather works as a graduate assistant at the university she attends.

Heather’s interview was the longest; it lasted sixty-five minutes. During the interview the participant exemplified her excitement about the profession. She discussed her experiences with passion and zeal. Heather displayed her commitment by becoming involved in over ten professional organizations. Genuine, friendly, open-minded, caring and hardworking are the adjectives that Heather uses to describe herself.

Jane: participant #4

Jane’s interview was conducted in her office which was a conductive environment for an interview, free from distraction and interruptions. It was a typical counseling office with chairs and a desk, decorated for the population that Jane serves. The interview was conducted at a small table near the window. The interview lasted fifty-two minutes.

Jane is a fifty-nine year-old married white female and reported an annual income of 91 to 100 thousand dollars a year. Jane has a master’s degree and is known as an
established counselor in the community with over fifteen years of clinical experience. She identified as a community counselor, but has had a variety of experiences in her career including being a supervisor and as an adjunct faculty at local universities.

Jane described herself as energetic, supportive, loyal, enthusiastic, and creative. With Jane’s specialty of counseling children, her qualities seem to be suited for the clientele she serves. Jane is not only a driving force at the agency in which she works she has been influential in the profession. She has held numerous professional titles including, but not limited to, the president of her state counseling organization. Jane has remained involved in numerous professional organizations throughout her career.

Sarah: participant #5

Sarah is a twenty-seven-year-old married, white female who had recently obtained her master’s degree in mental health counseling. Sarah had practicum and internship experience and was excited at the recent news that she had recently been hired at her internship site. As a licensed professional counselor, Sarah identifies as a community counselor.

At her request, Sarah’s interview was conducted at a Barnes and Nobel bookstore near her home. Sarah’s interview was the shortest interview conducted, lasting only twenty three minutes long. Sarah would answer direct questions but did not offer additional unsolicited information. Even when prompted to elaborate on the information shared, Sarah did not expand.
Out of the eight participants, Sarah appeared to be the most conservative in nature
(i.e. dress code, lack of conversation, soft spoken, etc) during the interview. Sarah
reported having the least amount of experience in the counseling field and reported
having the least amount of advocacy experience for the counseling profession. She did
report having legislative advocacy experience and described herself as grounded, hopeful,
happy, reflective, and friendly.

Gretchen: participant #6

Gretchen was a twenty-nine year old married white female who had completed
her master’s program in community counseling and recently withdrawn from a doctoral
program so she could attend a Gestalt therapy training program. Gretchen reported that
she plans to reenroll in a doctoral program in the future but that at the current time she
wanted to pursue her specialty interest.

At the time of the interview Gretchen was working in the counseling profession as
a clinician and reported having less than three years of clinical experience. Gretchen is a
licensed counselor, a certified family life educator, and identifies as a community
counselor. She is very involved in her profession through membership in a variety of
organizations and by obtaining leadership positions within the profession. Gretchen
described herself as dedicated, determined, generous, driven, and open minded.

Gretchen’s interview was conducted at a small coffee shop near her home. There
were a few other patrons in the coffee shop, but the small table in which the interview
was conducted was out of the way. The interview lasted thirty-three minutes.
Amanda: participant #7

At the time of the interview Amanda, a thirty-six-year old white female, was in the final stages of completing her doctoral dissertation. Although she was not currently working as a counselor Amanda reported having four to six years of clinical experience. In addition to working in her private practice setting, Amanda was working as an adjunct faculty. She identified as a community mental health counselor and a counselor educator.

Being very active in the profession was important to Amanda. Her commitment was illustrated in the number of organizations in which she participated. When asked to describe herself Amanda used the descriptive terms of intense, committed, accepting, hardworking, and scientific. Her commitment to her family and her profession were demonstrated throughout her interview.

Amanda’s interview was conducted in an office/spare bedroom at the participant’s home and lasted sixty-eight minutes. The interview was briefly interrupted twice; once for Amanda to speak with her daughter and a second time by the cable guy.

Adam: participant #8

Adam is a thirty-six year old married white male who reported an annual salary of over $100,000.00 Adam works as a counselor educator and teaches a variety of courses including, by not limited to, school counseling. He also stated that he has experience working as a community counselor.
Adam holds many leadership positions within his profession. For example, at the
time of the interview, Adam was the president elect for the state counseling organization
and is an active member in ten organizations. When asked to describe himself, Adam
reported that he is focused, fun, goal orientated, relaxed, and humorous.

Adam’s interview lasted approximately fifty-three minutes. Adam’s interview
was conducted at a local restaurant near the participant’s home. Despite the busy
atmosphere the interview was conducted with only minor interruptions.

Qualitative Research Results

Interviewing the counselor advocates provided an enormous amount of
information. The core process of becoming an advocate for the counseling profession
emerged from participants’ descriptions about how they became an advocate. This study
revealed a number of different themes that the participants exemplified when presenting
their perceptions and lived experiences concerning becoming an advocate for the
counseling profession.

Four major themes emerged: a) education, b) mentorship, c) professional aspects,
and d) personal aspects. Several were further broken into subthemes. The theme
professional aspects was divided into professional involvement and professional identity.
The fourth theme personal aspects was further separated into personal characteristics
[passion, fear, sense of responsibility, and confidence] and personal experiences.
Throughout the remainder of this chapter these themes and sub-themes will be developed,
direct quotes will give the readers an in-depth understanding of the cases that have emerged and insight into answering the research question.

Emergent cases

Several cases emerged from this data. This section will give a description of these cases. It will describe how education and training, mentorship, professional and personal aspects influence advocacy by using participant quotes to support the findings.

Education and training

Each participant discussed how education impacted their journey to become an advocate for the counseling profession. Participants’ discussed how their training in their masters and doctoral programs encouraged them to advocate. Other participants discussed how their training programs did not have an advocacy focus and they reported that they had to self-educate on the topic or they had to obtain education by attending additional trainings outside their formal education system in order to learn about advocacy. Additionally, participants spoke of how, as educators, they incorporated advocacy instruction into their curriculum.

Seven of the eight participants reported that they had some form of advocacy training during their graduate training programs. Although none of the participants reported having a course dedicated to advocacy, they reported that advocacy was infused in their counselor education programs in a variety of ways. For example, participants
gave accounts of learning about advocacy through specific class projects and assignments. Several participants reported that this instruction occurred in their masters program whereas others reported that they were introduced during their doctoral training.

Sarah described her experience as a student in a master’s level community counseling program as one that continually emphasized the importance of advocacy by counselors. She reported that “our professors in my program really push advocacy” (p. 2, l. 2). “It is just pushed in every one of our classes and they encourage us to go to other workshops as well” (p. 2, l. 4). She further reported that “through graduate school there have been opportunities to be an advocate” (p.11, l. 20). When discussing her first advocacy attempt Sarah described that it began during her first year in the counseling program. Sarah described her experience in her Ethics course by explaining, “We had to look at a certain ethical issue or a certain legislative issue that was going on and I investigated state bill fifty”. Sarah recalls not only researching the issue but also presenting the information to her colleagues and encouraging others to advocate for the profession by writing letters to legislators. She stated “I did a presentation in our class about it [a mental health law], encouraged other people to write legislators and then I, myself, wrote letters to our senators” (p.3, l. 7). When asked what made her move from the contemplative state to the action stage of advocacy she explained the impact of education on her journey. “I think for myself learning more and becoming more passionate about the field and then through formal methods like through my classes and then workshops that we were encouraged to go to” (p. 4, l. 3) she exclaimed. She went on to describe how her professors exemplified the importance of advocacy in ways other than formal coursework. She described their passion and the effect of parallel process. “I
think it is everyone in our program, every professor is really passionate about advocacy and it is intertwined within every class” (p.6, l. 8) she reported. Additionally, she described how education has impacted her advocacy endeavors. She stated it has given her the advocacy language to use. “I think more of a drive to understand the counseling profession, the history of it, where it can go” she stated (p. 10, l. 12). She reports that education increased her professional identity which in turn increased her desire to be an advocate (p. 11, l. 12).

Several other counselors also described the importance of their graduate training program with jumpstarting their advocacy interests. In addition to Sarah’s account, Heather stated “the education that I was getting as a masters level student was very focused on advocacy and how it’s important to become and advocate as part of your professional identity and I think that that was probably drilled into all of us”. Jane further testified to the importance that education has on counselors learning to advocate. Jane reported that her first experience advocating was also during a graduate level course, her group counseling course. She reported that as a graduate student she remembers being encouraged to write letters to legislators so she “went along with the program” (p. 3, l. 12).

Contrary to Sarah, Jane, and Heather’s experiences some participants reported that the lack of advocacy training in their masters programs further motivated them to become an advocate. Amanda reported that she did not receive advocacy training in her masters program, but that she was fortunate enough to have it in her doctoral program training. She described her experience in her masters program as being a disappointment,
from the professional identity perspective. She reported that she graduated from her masters program without knowing the name of the flagship journal.

I didn’t know a single thing. I came out of my masters program and didn’t even know that the *Journal of Counseling and Development* was the flagship journal for our profession. I didn’t know anything. I didn’t know how much that impacted me until I learned information about our profession. Having knowledge about our profession and having an experience that was void of any kind of professionalism… and understanding what it meant to be a counselor… I knew my experience wasn’t unique because I had gone through my program and I knew others were still going through the program. Now I teach in that program. You can bet I hall my bottom in there with all kinds of counseling and professional issues. I am one person and my impact is small but it is one place in that program that at least in my mind I know these students know … here is this journal, the journal for our profession (p. 5, l. 2).

This statement reflects that Amanda views her ability to educate others about the counseling profession is one way to advocate for the profession. Her disappointment in her master’s program and her passion for the profession were evident as she discussed her efforts to be a change agent and advocate for the profession of counseling.

As Tami reflected on the experience, she reported that this lack of emphasis about professional issues has motivated her to advocate to the novice counselors. As mentioned in the above quote, Amanda reported that she knew that she was not the only person who has graduated from a masters program that did not emphasize the importance of professional identity and advocacy. In addition to Amanda, Tami also described her lack of advocacy training in her masters program as impacting her views on the need for advocacy in counselor education programs. Despite her disappointment in not receiving advocacy training, Tami described a much more positive experience in her training program. She reported “maintained very close ties with the university where I got my masters. It was a nice community and I think it helped me develop a sense of professional
identity and staying in touch with counseling [organizations]” (p. 4, l. 18). When asked if she would have liked more emphasis on advocacy in her education program, Tami stated,

Yea, I don’t think I had any of it and if I did I don’t remember it so I think that it wasn’t significant enough to stand out. I do wish there was, if not a whole course on it. I think it would be useful. I think there probably should be. I think that would be a way for counseling students to develop an appreciation for what they need to do (p. 1, l. 4).

In addition to receiving advocacy training in their graduate training three of the participants, who have taught at the graduate level, reported that they emphasized advocacy in the courses they have taught. They stated that one way to advocate for the profession is to teach others about the importance of advocacy. Jane reported “when I teach a masters level class, I always talk about advocacy, professional development and the importance of being a part of a professional organization” (p. 8, l. 7). Amanda stated that she does not have the academic freedom to require her students to conduct an advocacy project but that she does suggest, recommend, and ask her students to advocate for the profession. She stated “but when I have academic freedom I will be requiring it” (p. 29, l. 6). Adam gave examples of how he intertwines advocacy into his counseling courses. One example he shared was how he gives an extra credit questions on the course exams asking students to recall the American Counseling Association’s advocacy website address. In addition, he shared how he has demonstrated legislative letter writing with his students. He explained “I will do it right in front of the class. I will bring up the computer screen and I will draft the letter and I will change it around and I will hit send and we will all watch it as a class and I will say now all go home and do that” (p. 31, l. 9). He reported that he does not think that letter writing is the most effective manner of advocacy, but that he uses it in his courses to jumpstart the interest in advocacy.
In addition to advocacy training in their graduate programs, all participants attended the State Legislative Institute and three participants also attended the American Counseling Association’s (ACA) Legislative Institute. The majority of participants gave accounts of additional training that they have attended on advocacy including advocacy workshops at professional conferences. These training conferences have positively influenced the participants’ journey toward becoming an advocate. Amanda gave a great account of how impactful additional trainings can motivate counselors to become advocates for the profession. She described how one of her colleagues encouraged her to attend the training and that this experience initiated her interest in advocacy. Her eyes lit up when she described the ACA Legislative Institute training experience. She declared that it changed her career goals. She reported that the legislative training “really shaped how I viewed my profession and it is what gave me a full understanding of what it meant and why it was important. It made me interested in being an advocate for the profession” (p. 4, l. 2). She explained how the infectious enthusiasm of the training led to her offering advocacy training seminars once she returned home. She stated that she immediately came home from the training and “began giving presentations and trainings on reasons why counselors needed to become advocates for their profession and up until then I didn’t even know that” (p. 4, l. 11). “It had a huge impact on me” (p. 4, l. 8), she declared. This education experience was so influential that Amanda focused on advocacy throughout her doctoral studies and even completed a dissertation titled “The Relationship Between Counselors’ Professional Affiliations and Advocacy Attitudes and Actions as Defined by the Lange Profession Advocacy Scale”. Even after
five years, she continues to utilize the information learned in this training seminar to
educate others at local, state, and national conferences.

Despite it being discussed in different capacities all participants discussed the
positive impact of education and training on their personal journey toward becoming an
expert advocate for the profession. Whether it began in the masters or doctoral program
or whether it was acquired during a continuing education unit session, all participants
gave detailed accounts similar to those shared in the above case. In addition to explaining
how it has impacted their journey many participants discussed how they are using their
knowledge to further educate the counselors, through coursework, guest speaker
presentations, and contributing to the literature.

Mentorship

All but one of the participants discussed having someone in their life who they
considered an influential senior supporter or leader who offered guidance or direction
with advocacy; this led to mentorship being the next case discussed in this results section.
Participants credited their mentors as impacting how active they have been in the
professional advocacy movement. Five participants named at least one individual who
influenced their advocacy, whereas two participants indicated that even though they did
not consider it a “mentor” relationship, the modeling of senior leaders influenced their
advocacy.

Jane’s account of mentorship exemplified the impact that one person can have on
another’s career, to such a degree that she credited one mentor with not only motivating
her to become an advocate for the counseling profession, but she also credits her mentor for a lot of success that she has achieved throughout her career. Jane described how she watched her mentor model advocacy behaviors. She explained how he was instrumental in opening professional doors for her.

He [mentor] would call me and say Jane I have an opportunity for you. I would like you to think about being on this committee or being a part of this task force or would you be willing to speak with this particular student (p. 2, l1). Dr. X [mentor] was the one who tapped into that enthusiasm and that passion. He opened doors for me, where I could act upon that interest. He provided me with the openings and he knew the people for me to contact. He knew where to connect me so I could then move forward (p. 2, l. 13).

During the interview Jane related nearly all questions back to the impact of mentorship. When asked why she advocated for the first time she gave credit to mentorship that occurred in her educational experience. She reported that she advocated “because it was encouraged by the professor” (p.6, l. 3) When asked what made her different than others counselors who do not advocate, Jane referenced her mentor.

I think it is the mentorship that I had, the encouragement to be involved in things and the encouragement to stretch myself beyond my little world and get involved in state, national, and international stuff. I think it started out with that mentor and that encouragement.

As she described the relationship that she continues to have with her mentor, her admiration and affection for him exuded through her smile. It should be noted that in addition to Jane, the other advocates expressed the influence of a mentor.

“Those [advocacy training sessions] are fine and they can be helpful but I don’t see them anywhere close to being as helpful as having that mentor helping someone else” epitomizes the impact that Adam’s mentor had on him becoming an advocate. Adam described his relationship with his mentor and how he attributed his initiation into
professional advocacy to his mentor, for whom he was a graduate assistant. When asked how he became interested in advocating for the profession, Adam credited his professor and mentor by stating,

I would say it started more in my doc program. I had a mentor that was a strong advocate for counseling and for counselors, a strong advocate for all community counselors and school counselors. I ended up working as his GA and I would spend a lot of time with him. He would talk about all these different issues at the state level (p. 2, l. 13).

When asked to describe when his interest spearheaded into action, Adam again referenced his mentor. He stated that many of his graduate assistant tasks revolved around his mentor’s advocacy agenda. He reported being given the opportunity to present at a state meeting to educate others about a school counseling related concern. As Adam continued to reflect on mentorship, he began to remember other mentorship that occurred earlier in his career. He reflected back to a time in his masters program when he had a conversation with his advisor about what which track he was going to take in the mental health profession. He recalled this advisor explaining the different types of mental health licensure.

As with the education component, several participants discussed how they paid it forward through advocacy mentorship. Interestingly, like with the education of others, the participants thought of mentorship as one of the many techniques of advocacy for the profession. They saw their role as a mentor as advancing the profession one person at a time. Adam described how he implemented this technique when he modeled advocacy in his classroom. Jane discussed several times that she has used mentorship as a method of advocacy. She stated “I typically am doing the clinical supervision for all the PC’s that we hire and so I include advocacy and all of that as part of that. I drag them with me to
workshops and have them present with me” (p. 14, l. 23). She went on to explain the
details of how she mentors novice counselors encouraging them to become involved in
their profession and advocate to advance their profession.

The interesting element in this is that participants’ mentors were professors in
their graduate training program, connecting the cases of education and mentorship to
advocacy motivation. When asked how she thought her education and training impacted
her advocacy efforts Jane answered the question by stating that two things really helped
her become an advocate. Jane disclosed that the initial suggestion, by a professor, to write
a letter to a legislator and that her mentorship by a strong advocate in the field influenced
her journey. Jane’s statement further solidified the intertwining of these two cases.
Another fascinating element that came from the research is that the only participant,
Tami, did not discuss mentorship. She also reported that she did not learn about advocacy
in her training program. She credited her advocacy journey more to professional
experiences in the field and personal maturation.

Professional aspects

The case of professional aspects was expected to transpire because this research
looks specifically at advocacy for the profession. Two prominent themes emerged when
looking at the professional elements that motivated counselors to become advocates;
professional identity and professional involvement. These two cases overlap
considerably, but are discussed as separate components due to the impact that they had on
the counselors who participated in this study. Moreover, these two components are being
discussed separately to give a full understanding of the individual impact that they have had on advocacy for the counseling profession.

Professional identity

All participants referenced their professional identity throughout the entirety of their interview. Each participant gave individualized stories about how they developed their professional identity. Some participants discussed several components that are encompassed into identity including; education, licensure, professional experience, professional involvement, etc. Each participant reported that as their professional identity solidified, their professional advocacy increased.

Heather, a newly licensed professional counselor, reported “I am really a solid part of the field”. She went into details about how the licensure process increased her feelings of counselor identity. She gave accounts of the steps that students encountered throughout their training but she reported that certain elements in becoming a counselor have a great impact on identity and esteem of counselors. For Heather, graduation and licensure were identity solidifying achievements. Heather lit up with pride for her recent accomplishments. She described the exhilaration that she felt when her licensure documentation came in the mail and the excitement that she had when she was able to have business cards made with her distinguishing initials. Heather reflected on why she started advocating at the time in which she did, verses earlier in her professional endeavors. She stated “I think now that I have a better idea of what a master’s level counselor can do and more about the profession as a whole I am much more active then I
was during my masters program” (P. 7, l.8). She continued discussing her increased professional confidence and licensure and that they added to the solidification of her professional identity. She testified that as her education increased her identity increased and as her identity increased her feelings of responsibility to advocate for the counseling profession increased. Specifically Heather stated “I think as my professional identity got stronger the more I felt the need to advocate” (p.18, l. 3).

Jane, the most seasoned participant, responded in a similar way to Heather, the youngest participant, when discussing professional identity. Despite their stark differences in professional experience, these two participants both took pride in identifying as a professional counselor. Both described how their professional identity motivated their professional advocacy. Jane declared, “I have been told that I am a counselor to the core and I guess that is just who I am” (p. 8, l. 23). Jane continued to discuss how she has watched the profession develop over time and how her identity as part of the profession has further motivated her to continue her advocacy agenda. She described:

I didn’t realize it at the time but when I first went into counseling we were still on the basement level because we just got licensure. I didn’t really realize the fact that I was part of this developing profession. I have been able to over the past twenty years watch the profession grow and I have been a part of that. That is an exciting thing for me to be a part of and watch it happen and feel that I have some influence on it (p. 8. l. 24).

As with education and mentorship, the two previous cases discussed, professional identity overlaps other cases. One quote, stated by Sarah, epitomized the overlap between education, mentorship, and professional identity. She declared:

I think through our program [graduate level masters program] they’ve [professors/mentors] talked a lot about what it means to be a counselor and not
just the day to day but as a lifestyle. Um, and that professional identity, so, I think it almost puts more responsibility on our plates to advocate. Not just counselors in the community but really to advocate for the field in general (p. 11, l. 5).

Involvement in professional organizations

All but one of the participants, the least seasoned advocate, discussed the impact of professional involvement. Although no participant directly stated that one organization impacted their advocacy efforts, the expert advocates discussed the effects that organizational membership and service have had on them and other professionals. They also discussed how they utilized their service positions in organizations to impact the profession’s advocacy agenda. The participants described how involvement advanced their experience, education, understanding, and awareness about advocacy. They also pointed out that involvement in professional organizations is also an advocacy technique. Service to the organizations through leadership positions was viewed as advancements for the profession by the participants.

Several participants reported viewing their support of organizations through membership funds as another way to assist in the advocacy agenda for the profession. When discussing the cost of professional involvement, Amanda reported that the benefits outweigh the costs. She stated that counselors who cite cost as a reason for not being a member of a professional organization are “ignorant to the impact of professional involvement”. Amanda gave a very passionate argument for the need of professional membership to strengthen the profession. She reported that membership fees allow you to advocate indirectly by paying to “belong to the organization that is advocating to keep
your rights and to get your rights” (p. 15, l. 15). Molly confirmed that she believed similarly to Amanda. Molly discussed an experience that she had when she was guest speaking to a class about advocacy. She reported telling them “it is so important to join organizations so that you know your dollars are going to talk for yourself basically… so we can get our issues passed. It [professional membership] is important” (p. 23, l. 16).

In addition to the indirect result that membership can have on professional advancement, several members reported that awareness is a direct benefit that they received from being a member of an organization. Participants conveyed that they would not be aware of the professional advocacy issues had they not been a member of an organization. They all reported that they responded to the call for advocacy emails that are sent to counselors via organization listserves. Tami declared:

As I got information through different organizations that these are issues that are affecting counselors and ultimately clients… I became more and more interested in what the specific issues were. And then I happened to receive an email about the legislative institute and when I read about it I thought ya know this is really a new avenue I’d like to see myself get involved in. (p. 5, l. 4).

Heather discussed how she stayed connected to the counseling field and advocacy issues through her professional membership. When asked whether professional organizations impacted her advocacy efforts Heather explained the positive connection.

I think because I am connected to more of these things [professional organizations] I think that does definitely help. I am planning on going to the state counseling conference. I am planning on going to the NCACES [North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision] and I’d like to go to ACES [Association for Counselor Education and Supervision]… (p. 14, l. 8).

When asked whether professional organizations provide education on issues to advocate for and how to advocate, Heather responded by explaining how organization educate members about issues via email listserves. She continued by stating that people who are
not members of organizations are “missing that link of information or that education link” (p. 15, l. 13)

In addition to describing how counselors are impacted by membership in professional organizations, the participants discussed their service in professional organizations. They elaborated on how service in professional organizations has impacted their interest in advocacy and how they have used their influence to further professional advocacy initiatives. It is noteworthy to discuss the participants’ membership and service in professional counseling organizations. Specifically, seven of the eight participants belong to over eight professional organizations. Two of the participants have been president of the state counseling association. Several participants have held leadership positions in state, regional, and local organizations. Each participant discussed how his or her passion to advocate led to his or her involvement in professional organizations which in turn led to the use of leadership positions to advocate for the profession.

Gretchen described how her mentors encouraged her to become involved in professional organizations. She described her mentors’ work as leaders and how they inspired her to take the initiative to become a leader. “Based on the fact that they were working in a lot of leadership type positions and roles I wanted to get involved. I wanted to be able to participate. It just sort of naturally led into a lot of different type of advocacy type roles” (p.2, l. 7) Gretchen explains. She described her experience as the president of one of the regional chapters of her state counseling association. She went on to express her development of membership and awards chair positions for her graduate program’s Chi Sigma Iota chapter. Furthermore, she discussed her involvement in creating scholarship funds for students to attend professional conferences, her advocacy
committee work, and her position on the Political Action Committee (PAC) taskforce for the state organization.

Jane, one of the state counseling organizations past presidents, described how she used her leadership position to further advocate for the profession. Jane explained how she utilized her position.

As president of the state organization, I really pushed for an advocacy day on the hill kind of thing. It was a passion that I had and I really wanted it and I gave the responsibility for that to the legislative committee. Mr. X and Mrs. Y took it and did it. It was very successful and to the point where I think it is going to be a yearly event (p. 3, l. 22).

To her credit, the state legislative institute training has educated over two hundred individuals about legislative advocacy in just the first two years.

Personal aspects of an advocate

During the interviews the participants shared a lot of personal information. They revealed information about their personality and about their life events and experiences. This personal information influenced their advocacy work personal aspects will be one of the cases discussed. The case of personal aspect has been divided into personal characteristics and personal experiences. Participants made a case that several different personal characteristics influenced their advocacy efforts including passion, sense of responsibility, fear, and confidence. The participants also discussed the influence that individualized personal life experiences had on the process of becoming an advocate.
Personal characteristics of an advocate

I did not expect persons to discuss their personal attributes as having such a great influence on their advocacy journey prior to interviewing the participants. Despite my expectations, each participant discussed several characteristics that he or she attributed to him or her becoming an advocate. Furthermore, most participants reported that persons who do not advocate for the profession are void of these specific characteristics. It was interesting that the participants presumed that these attributes were unique to a small sect of counselors, specifically to the sect of counselor advocates. The characteristics mentioned most frequently by participants were passion, sense of responsibility, fear, and confidence. Participants also discussed personal attributes such as determination, opportunism, without using direct descriptive vocabulary to describe these attributes.

Passion

Before the interviews even began the participants’ passion for advocacy was evident. They were eager to give back to the field through research; enthusiastic to share their story and educate someone about their endeavors, and were excited to meet with a fellow advocate. The manners in which they told their stories exuded passion. They shared stories, reminisced about their experiences, and revealed personal information which all conveyed passionate emotions. Passion was discussed in a variety of ways; participants described their passion for clients, for the mental health field, and for
advocacy for the counseling profession. Some participants discussed their own passion whereas others discussed the passion that they witnessed others display.

Many participants actually used the descriptive word “passion” whereas some discussed their fervor, excitement, and enthusiasm in other descriptive ways to describe how they feel about advocacy. Jane used the word ‘passion’ approximately six times throughout her interview to describe how she feels about being a counselor advocate. When Jane discussed the differences between mental health professions her passion for the counseling profession radiated. Jane stated that when she started working at her current mental health agency, over twenty years ago, the majority of the clinicians were social workers. She discussed how she advocated for counselors and the impact that her advocacy has had on the clinicians hired at her agency. She proudly reported that the majority of the clinicians are now licensed counselors. When asked what led to her interest in advocacy, Jane responded by explaining “I just have a real passion for the profession and feel very very strongly that it is the best, that we are best trained to provide mental health services for clients that are in need” (p.2, l8). She went on to brag about the internship program at her agency and about the influential “big wigs” that have worked as counselors in the agency. Her passion was exhibited in the way that her face lit up as she bragged about her advocacy accomplishment.

Molly mentioned passion numerous times during her interview about being a counselor advocate. Molly started off the interview discussing passion. When asked to define advocacy for the counseling profession, she stated “advocacy for the counseling profession means someone who is passionate about the issues that concern counselors…” (p.1, l. 20). Molly affirmed her motivational force by stating, “I think just being very
passionate about what I do, and the importance of advocacy, and teaching other people ya know”. When she speaks about frustration with the status quo of not getting the respect the counseling profession deserves. Molly reiterates that “I am able to stand up and speak and it is the passion [behind that] ya know” (p.21, l.4). Molly explained that what made her a good advocate was her personal experience and the passion behind that. “If I feel strong about something then I will speak up” Molly declared (p. 4, l. 9).

Although Amanda does not use the word “passion” in her description about the intrinsic value of advocacy, it is apparent that she is passionate about her work as an advocate for the counseling profession. She reported that each counselor has his or her own niche that resonates with him or her whether that is to stop domestic violence or some other cause. Amanda discussed how advocacy just resonates with her at a deeper level than it does for non-advocates. She reports that she has found her niche early in her doctoral training after she attended the ACA legislative training institute.

Sarah discussed passion in two capacities. She described her passion and the passion of the professors in her master’s program. Sarah conveyed that her passion grew throughout her graduate training. She stated, “I think just with um myself learning more and becoming more passionate about the field and through formal methods, like through my classes and then the workshops that we were encouraged to go to” (p. 4, l. 3). In addition to her personal passion, Sarah described how the passionate environment in her master’s program affected her role as an advocate for the profession. “I think it is everyone in our program, every professor is really passionate about advocacy and it is intertwined within every class” Sarah described (p.6, l8). These statements linked several
of the themes that have emerged in this study. She linked the importance of education, mentorship, and personal characteristics like passion.

Participants also discussed the impact of passion displayed by others. When Gretchen described her mentor’s enthusiasm she stated “I think I had somebody who was really very passionate about professional identity and advocacy and how you can incorporate that into your professional life. It inspired me to get involved in it [advocacy] and once I got involved in it I loved it and it was meeting a lot of needs for me” (p. 17, l. 11). In addition to her mentor’s passion, Gretchen described the passion of other advocates and how it motivated her to continue her advocacy agendas. The following is Gretchen’s discussion regarding motivation:

I think just being very passionate about what I do (p. 26, l. 6). I think one of the other things that keeps me motivate for advocacy is going to CEU type workshops or attending different kinds of things like the legislative day. When you go you hear other people get real passionate and bond together and really work. I think that is keeps me going (p. 28, l. 8).

Gretchen’s description illustrates how parallel processes can occur with advocacy. The excitement and enthusiasm can be contagious.

One interesting aspect of this data is that all but one participant, Adam, emphasized that passion is part of the reason they advocate. Despite the constant reference to passion none of the participants listed passionate as one of the adjective that describes them on the demographic questionnaire. Overall, only three of the participant even mentioned one of the adjectives that they documented as descriptive attributes on their demographic sheet.
**Sense of responsibility**

“Oh yea, absolutely, yea, without question” is how Molly answered the question “Do you feel responsible to advocate for your profession?” All participants discussed how they feel responsible for their profession. Many participants articulated that they are responsible for the professions advancement and that it is part of their professional role or identity. When asked “What makes you different than counselors who do not advocate?” Adam reported that two things could affect advocacy one of which is responsibility for the profession. Adam declared:

> I feel some ownership for my profession. I am trying to think what attribute that might be but I don’t know I just feel like it is my profession and I am a part of it. I just feel like you have to have ownership in how it shapes, develops, or moves maybe a sense of ownership (p. 14, l. 11).

Tami was also very passionate about how novice counselors need to become aware of their responsibility, as a counselor, for the profession. She noted that she feels intrinsically motivated to advocate stating:

> I guess it is a sense of pride in my professional group, in the counseling profession and in watching it to continue to grow and develop… If there is an issue that hits me or grabs my attention I’ll act on it whether it is about counseling or something else… I guess I am not sure what the quality would be. It is just something hits home and I feel compelled to do something (p.7, l. 4).

When I noted that it sounds like that is an internal sense of responsibility Tami responded by stating “that is a good way to put it” (p.7, l. 14). She further exemplified her sense of responsibility to the profession by reporting,

> This is not just getting a job, this is a responsibility and a career ya know. We owe it to our profession to come together and have some unity (p. 18, l. 17). This is not just your path to go and get a job but this is a responsibility you have to your client and your profession. (p. 18, l. 8)
As Gretchen described her role as a counselor, she explained how she feels responsible for the advancement of the profession. She reported that she receives numerous benefits from advocating, her payment is watching the profession develop. She declared:

I think in a way if you do continue to advocate, you do also increase job potential for counselors. But I also think for me it is really about furthering my professions development… really being educated about what is happening currently rather than just sitting back and just … in my mind part of being a counselor is not just seeing a client. It is not just checking into an office every morning. It is about taking leadership roles to you know develop the profession. so um the things I get from it… I think it is a sense of professional development and personal satisfaction (p. 15, l. 6).

It is evident by Gretchen’s statement that she not only feels responsible for her future, but also for that of other counselors and the profession as a whole.

As discussed in the education case, Amanda described her sense of responsibility when she described her return from the ACA legislative institute training. She reported that she felt responsible for disseminating information to her colleagues. She further articulated her sense of responsibility when discussing her experience as a graduate from masters program that did not entwine advocacy into the curriculum. Amanda claimed that she later returned to teach at the college because she felt responsible to that counseling program, to the counseling students, and to the profession as a whole. She held herself responsible to correct this program’s inadequacies which led to her returning to the university as a professor to give the students a well rounded education, that including advocacy training.
Fear

The majority of participants reported that they have experienced fear during their advocacy journey. All instances of fear were discussed when the participants were discussing advocating at a national level. When discussing her first experience advocating for the profession Amanda discussed the anxiety surrounding her visit to Capitol Hill. Amanda captured her experience “my first experience was going up and advocating on Capitol Hill which was scary and intense and that makes an impact on you” (p. 6, l. 6).

Tami and Molly both described their interactions with state representatives. They indicated the fear diminished the more acquainted they got with the advocacy process. Tami reported “I had a regular conversation with my councilman he was always willing to talk. He was always willing to call back. It might not be right away but he would get back and be able to talk about those issues and I think that kina takes away some of the fear about it” (p. 16, l. 17). Molly gave an example of how she overcame her fear and spoke with a representative at a fundraiser. She told a story of how she gained courage to discuss the issues with the councilman. She reports that she then contacted a well known counselor advocate, who knew more about the specific issues then she did, to follow-up and advocate for the profession. This account eloquently describes how she not only overcame her fear but also how she used her resources to advocate at the national level.

When discussing why she was emailing representatives as a method of advocacy, Heather reported that she recognizes the importance of providing legislative testimony as a form of advocacy. Fear had prevented Heather from taking that step to advocate at the
legislative level. She reports “presenting something at advocacy day terrifies me. At some point I realize that I am going to be moving into a role that I am going to do more of that…” She maintained by stating “it is still a little intimidating.”

Several participants discussed their personal fear whereas others discussed fear that they have watched others experience. Jane reported that students who attended the state legislative institute were scared to approach a state representative. She mentored these students by demonstrating how to advocate for the profession. Jane reminisced about the event stating, “I actually visited a legislative assistant office with a group of students and they were a little apprehensive, a little scared or whatever. I said ‘Oh I’ll go with you…’ I think it was a positive experience for them’” (p. 4, l. 10). She went on to explain that as a mentor in this type of experience “you instill that enthusiasm… You also help students and professionals to see that this isn’t so hard to go talk to someone that is not that difficult and then they are more willing to do it later on” (p. 4, l. 18).

In addition to acknowledging their own fear, participants reported that fear is also a reason why counselors do not advocate. When asked why people do not advocate Tami reported “I think people are intimidated to talk to a senator or representative or they might fear that their voice really doesn’t count” (p. 4, l. 14). Strikingly, Amanda even discussed fear as a tactic to influence others to advocate. She reported that if counselors fear that they will lose something (i.e. the right to diagnosis or the right to practice) the fear will motivate them to take action and advocate for the counseling profession. Amanda reminisced about a time when she was speaking with a leading official about what it will take to get counselors to realize the importance of professional advocacy. She reported:
I have been trying all kinds of things [to make people advocate]. I have tried nice things and recently I have been trying scare tactics. I will pull out [the fact that] the Indiana Counseling Association recently lost their diagnosis privileges because psychologists tried to come in and lobby them away. Do you want psychologists to lobby away your privileges. So you should join professional organizations… Maybe I need to go to scare tactics… maybe fear… I don’t know maybe that is what is left (p. 12, l. 17).

As she continued to discuss her conversation with this high profile colleague, she reported that she was joking about how they could use fear to motivate other professionals “I think fear. I think we might need to use more fear” Amanda joked in a not-so-joking manner (p. 13, l. 6). Interestingly, Tami reported that fear prevented counselors from advocating whereas Amanda reported that the lack of fear creates complacent counselors who do not understand the importance of advocating for the counseling profession.

Confidence

When discussing fear nearly all the participants shared how they gained confidence, assisted others in gaining confidence, and gave examples of how they displayed confidence when advocating. Jane discussed how her mentorship inspired others to stretch themselves. She guided her mentee to become more involved in the profession. As a result the mentee was “able to get these positive accolades in front of that person [someone who intimidated her]. She said it just gave her so much energy, enthusiasm, and confidence” (p. 15, l. 3)
As stated in the ‘sense of responsibility’ section, Adam discussed two aspects that influence one to advocate. He listed a sense of responsibility as one and self confidence as the second. He reported

The second case would be maybe level of confidence. That what I do makes a difference or I have that I actually have a part of me that if I contribute to something then I can make a change. I can make something better. So, kind of a belief in myself that I have something to contribute (p. 15, l. 4).

As Adam discussed his journey to become an advocate for the counseling profession his confidence radiated. He gave examples during the interview conversation about not being afraid to ask for what he wants in life. He gave examples of how he approached the chancellor of a college to advocate for the counseling profession. Moreover, he discussed how he took the initiative to serve in highly regarded positions in professional organizations, such as the president of the state organization. All of the aforementioned situations are fine examples of his personal confidence. As he reflected on why some counselors do not advocate he declared, “I think maybe part of their personality. It’s just not part of what they are… feeling um they can really make a change to a broader system or not feeling confident” (p. 33, l. 1).

Tami’s story was slightly different then the other participants. She reported that she did not learn about advocacy in her graduate program nor did she have a mentor who demonstrated advocacy. Tami was hired in an agency with all social workers and learning the disparity first hand was one of the motivating forces for her to advocate. She also stated that her confidence impacted her advocacy history:

…personally for me it is more about my stage of life. I think if I was just out of my masters program I wouldn’t have had the confidence or the moxie to do it because I was a different person. That was just me. That isn’t necessarily that all people who are who are that age would have the confidence to do it but I think
that different stages of life people aren’t aware of the impact that they can have. For myself, I think I am not so offended by people that one bad experience is going to [deter me]… At a different time in my life I would have said ‘forget it’. I am not doing it. It would have taken a long time to get the courage to do it again because you do have to put yourself out there. You do have to talk about things that you don’t feel like you know how to talk about (p.17, l. 8).

Later in the interview she stated,

I think the age isn’t necessarily a characteristic. I think it’s just specific for me, in my own personal development; I just maybe didn’t have as much confidence in my own self. As I have become who I am today is different from who I was when I first got my masters. I don’t know that it is necessarily age. I see a lot of people who are at the same age or stage and they have great confidence and great moxie and a lot of aspiration ya know. I just didn’t have the same career vision. I just didn’t. It was more of an understanding for me. I just didn’t know everything what I was doing encompassed and that is where I think having a class would have benefited me (p. 20, l. 12).

Her journey of personal maturation assisted her in gaining confidence which in turn aided her in being an advocate for the counseling profession.

Heather discussed several ways that she gained confidence including graduating, obtaining licensure, and gaining clinical experience. She stated:

I feel more confident now that I am a licensed professional counselor. I feel like I have a good understanding of the profession and the problems that are out there and I don’t know if I knew about them as much or as good of an understanding [in my masters program] (p. 7, l. 11).

Heather responded “yes” to the question if confidence was a piece that came between her masters and doctoral training. She gave an account of how her confidence increased when she passed the state licensure test and when she got hired at her internship site.

I think it is definitely the confidence issue. I think I started getting more confidence the further I went through the program” (p. 22, l. 14) she declared. She continued by stating “I’m guessing masters students advocate less because they might feel they might just not have the confidence (p.22, l. 17).
Personal experience

As one would expect, leaving your work at the office may be easier said than done, especially if one is trying to advance the profession. It seems only natural that personal experiences would be a case discussed in this review of the results. During the interviews participants shared very personal life experiences with the researcher. Each participant discussed a different personal experience or situation that affected them as an advocate. Several of the participants discussed familial experiences. A few of their stories will be shared below with special care taken to protect the participant’s confidentiality.

Molly was the most emotionally moved participant during the interviewing process. At one point she began to cry and asked me to turn off the recording equipment so she could compose herself. Her tears expressed her passion for advocacy. She began telling the story; her journey was different than any other participant. Having a child with special needs, Molly reported she was an advocate before she became a counselor. She openly shared details about how she began advocating for her son’s special needs and how that has led to her advocating for the counseling profession.

It started a long time ago when I had a child with disabilities. I started advocating for him just so he was able to receive services in the school system and I became active with the autism support network (p. 2, l. 19). It got the ball rolling. I do feel like I paved the road for other kids in our community with receiving service (p. 17, l. 2).

As she shared the details about the difficult struggles that she endured as an advocate for her family her emotions became overwhelming. Her passion released as the tears trailed down her cheeks. Molly reported that her advocacy agenda switched gears once her son received the needed services, quiescently this was around the same time that she was
obtaining her masters in community counseling. She testified that she was able to focus her energy on a new injustice, that of counselors not being treated fairly within the mental health field.

Several other participants mentioned how their families impacted their advocacy. Amanda reported that she had a difficult time balancing being an advocate, a student, a mother, and a wife. She shared details about her personal struggles throughout her doctoral program and how her priorities have change through time.

When asked if she ever took time off from advocating, Jane reported that she was not as active of an advocate when her children were in high school because she had too many demands on her time. Each participant illustrated how their personal situations, be it family, work or other personal situations, effected how much they advocated at a particular time.

Several participants also reported that their being devoid of an experience also impacted their advocacy. Adam reported that he did not have contact with his school counselor.

I don’t remember my school counselor. I assume that I had one but I didn’t um I don’t have any type of guidance on careers or academics or personal types of issues. I just had to figure it out myself and something I figured out and it went well and other thing if I would have had a little help I think I could have been more successful but that person wasn’t there. I don’t know if I got lost in the group. I guess when I think about advocacy for that, I think about where was mine. She should have had a conversation at some point (p. 23, l. 5).

As Adam told his story I reflected on previous comments in the interview namely, his first experience as an advocate. He had reported that his first “real” advocacy experience was school counseling related, giving detailed accounts of several school counseling agendas for which he advocated. When questioned about the connection between his
personal lack of having a school counselor and his path as an advocate for the school counseling profession Adam responded “I think that experience [lack of having a school counselor] maybe pushes ya know. I enjoy that [school counseling] piece or maybe it pushes me in the school area…” (p. 23, l. 18).

Three participants shared a uniquely similar personal element. Sarah, Molly and Amanda reported that they have had some interaction with politics in their past. Sarah reported that she and her family have a background in politics. She confirmed:

I got my undergraduate degree in Washington D.C. So um I actually worked for my congressman quite a bit. Politics has always been in my family and our lives. I was an intern so I wrote letters back to constituents. I did research on different bills (p. 7, l. 4).

In addition to Sarah, two other participants offered information about their families’ involvement in politics. Amanda indicated that her father’s involvement in politics has made a significant impact on her professional advocacy efforts. She reflects back on the impact stating:

I have always had somewhat of an interest in politics. My dad is twice retired from civil service so I grew up in an environment. My dad worked for the city twice, once in City A and then once in City B so I have been exposed to some form of government my entire life. I wasn’t devoid of some of those experiences. I think that probably made some difference. It never dawned on me, I think so probably by the time I attended the Legislative Institute it was kind of brought full circle. I was exposed my entire life it wasn’t a hard thing for me to be able to do I have seen it going on all around me my entire life (p. 19 l. 8).

As she spoke it seemed as if this was the first time she made the connection between her service to the profession through advocacy and her father’s service to the community. The insight seemed to surprise her in a pleasant way.

When questioned about advocacy failure, Molly reported that she had not yet experienced an advocacy endeavor that she would consider a failure but that she knows it
is possible. She recounted a lesson that she learned from her mother’s political undertakings. Molly stated “Politics can really bite you in the rear end. You never take politics personally. I know that. My mom’s a mayor so I am always telling her ‘mom politics is messy, it is ugly but don’t take it personal’” (p. 27, l. 11). It was evident by this comment that Molly is no neophyte when it comes to politics. Her leadership qualities and passion to use political action to fight injustices are similar to that of her mother, a public servant.

Connection of Themes to Research Question

The research question examined in this research was how do counselors develop into advocates for the counseling profession? The cases described above all contribute to answering the research question. Previous to conducting the research, I presumed that several characteristics would affect the counselor’s journey of becoming an advocate including, but not limited to, education and training, skills and qualities, and professional identity. Due to my personal experiences as an advocate and the literature on advocacy, there were several characteristics that I expected the participants to discuss during their interviews. In addition to some of the expected attributes other aspects impacted a counselor’s journey to become an advocate for the field.

The journey to become an advocate for the profession encompasses many aspects. There is no key component that makes a counselor an advocate but there are several attributes and experiences that many expert advocates for the counseling profession encompass and/or share. The process of becoming an advocate started once the
professionals entered the graduate training program. Entering graduate training programs were the starting place for the development of professional identity. As counselors furthered their education in the traditional graduate programs and through continuing education credits their professional identity strengthened and solidified. During this time in training, frustration with the injustices within the field and dissatisfaction with the status quo opened the counselor’s eyes to the need for advocacy on behalf of the counseling profession.

Building on the education and the awareness of the need for advocacy counselors were spearheaded toward advocating for the profession with the encouragement of mentors. Mentorship had a huge influence on the counselors becoming advocates for the profession. Mentorship not only provided opportunity but the support and encouragement which in turn decreased fear and increased confidence, both qualities that beginning advocates discussed as influential during their journey toward becoming an advocate for the profession. The counselors’ journeys were also influenced by personal experiences that they had encountered. For example, one counselor began advocating for her son’s disabilities whereas several other advocates mentioned the impact of their family’s political involvement as impacting their confidence to advocate. Although no two counselors had the exact journey there seem to be a combination of characteristics that influenced their experience. All expert counselor advocates expressed how education, professional identity, professional involvement, and personal characteristics affected their work as an advocate.
Conclusion

The information shared by the participants was rich descriptive data about each of their individual journeys to become an advocate for the counseling profession. The data was condensed into emergent themes. These themes could also be delineated into subthemes. The fact that the themes often overlap with one another leads to the conclusion that becoming an advocate for the counseling profession is a more in-depth process than one previous action or event. These research results showed that process rather than consecutive steps that each person experiences.
CHAPTER V
OVERVIEW, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The final chapter of this study will present a summary of this research project. Chapter five will be divided into several sections including an overview of the study, discussion of the design, procedures and analysis, summary of the results, connections to existing research, additional findings of this research, implications of findings, limitations of the research, and recommendations for future researchers.

Overview of the Study

Advocacy has been essential to the development of the counseling profession; however, the counseling profession does not discern how a counselor becomes an advocate for the profession. Prior to this study, no research has been conducted that explores the process that counselor-advocates experience when becoming an advocate for the profession. There is no research about what components impact the counselors who advocate for the profession of counseling. This gap in the knowledge about advocacy greatly inhibits the counseling profession’s ability to influence non-advocates to become advocates. Furthermore, the inability to increase the number of advocates for the profession impedes the development and progression of the profession, which further
snowballs and affects the profession in a variety of ways. This study sought to fill this
gap in the research by exploring the experiences of counselors who advocate for the
counseling profession. The purpose of this study was to increase the awareness of the
components that affect a counselor’s journey toward becoming an advocate for the
profession and to learn more about counselors who advocate for the profession. The
research question “how do counselors develop into advocates for the counseling
profession” was used to develop specific interview questions. This open ended interview
allowed me to explore and gain insight into how a counselor becomes an advocate for the
profession.

Design, procedures, and data analysis

This section will give you a brief overview of the rationale for the qualitative
method and case study design. It will also summarize the participant demographics and
the data collection procedures. Finally, it will review the data analysis used in this
research.

Method and design

I chose qualitative methodology for this research for several reasons. As
recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1988), one rationale was the nature of the research
problems and questions. The nature of the study is often dictated by the research
previously conducted in the field. Due to the gap in the literature, it made sense to
conduct research that was exploratory in nature, which directly ties to the second reason that qualitative methodology was utilized, the lack minimal empirical research on how a counselor becomes an advocate for the profession. Additionally, qualitative inquiry is appropriate when exploring a process rather than a fixed instance.

After reviewing Van Wynsbergh and Khan’s (2007) prototype for case study research, case study design was selected for this research. My research had the seven features mentioned by Van Wynsbergh and Kahn: having a small sample size, producing a detailed contextual analysis, containing a limited control from the researcher, allowing researchers to generate hypotheses and lessons learned, utilizing multiple data sources, and offering extendibility to the reader of the research. Case study design was appropriate for this study because it also permitted me to obtain the participants’ subjective experiences, beliefs, and viewpoints. To learn about professional encounters, it was necessary to obtain information from the individuals who have lived the experience and to hear from individuals who have encountered the process of becoming an advocate. Thus, I interviewed counselors who had experience advocating for the counseling profession were interviewed.

Participants

The participants were homogeneous in regards to their geographical location and their professional background. Of the eight participants, seven were female and one was a male. One participant identified as biracial and seven identified as Caucasian. In addition to attending the state legislative training, three of the participants were also attendees of
the American Counseling Association’s legislative training institute, thus all participants had some formal advocacy training. Moreover, seven of the eight participants reported holding leadership positions in counseling organizations in which they advocate. Two of the participants had held the president position of the state counseling association.

Procedures

Several data collection procedures were used: including interviews, notes, and documentation. Initial interviews were conducted face-to-face with all participants. Interview locations and length of the interviews varied. Interviews were conducted at the following locations: participants’ home and work, restaurants, a coffee shop, a local college, and a book store. Lengths of the interviews varied from twenty-three to sixty-eight minutes depending on the participant. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. In addition to the individual interviews, I gathered data via analytical, descriptive and personal notes. Moreover, the participants supplied their curriculum vita and evidence of their advocacy efforts as additional documentation.

Data analysis

Each case was examined as a process rather than a one time encounter. In analyzing the data, a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning was used to assist in coding the data. Engaging myself in analysis, I reviewed each line, sentence, and paragraph to identify patterns in data. I looked for gaps, wholes, holes, and patterns in the
codes. As patterns emerged the data was clumped into logical themes. After I synthesized the data into general themes, I further deduced the information into more concise themes. Four major themes emerged. Sending each of the participants a synthesis of their interview assisted in verifying the accuracy of the data collected.

Summary of the results

The results revealed four prominent themes including education, mentorship, professional experiences, and personal aspects. The professional aspects theme had two primary components including professional identity and professional involvement. One subcategory of personal aspects was personal characteristics. The characteristics discussed the most frequently amongst the participants included passion, sense of responsibility, fear, and confidence. The second subcategory of personal aspects included personal experiences which were individualized to the participant.

Participants discussed how their education in their masters and/or doctoral program affected their advocacy efforts. Jane, Sarah, Gretchen, and Heather all gave specific examples of advocacy related class assignments that they completed in their counseling program. They attributed these assignments as one of the components that initiated their interest in professional advocacy. Participants revealed that they were educated in a variety of ways including formal education courses in their counselor education program, and continuing education workshops. Amanda attributes her experience at the advocacy training sponsored by the American Counseling Association
as changing her career goals. She emphasized the colossal impact that advocacy training had on her becoming an advocate for the counseling profession.

Participants also highlighted how they educate others about professional advocacy. They revealed that educational mentors facilitated the journey to become an advocate for the profession. Amanda, Jane, Adam, Gretchen, and Molly all discussed a particular mentor that impacted their professional identity and advocacy interest. They shared stories about how these mentors were instrumental. Amanda declared,

Yes there was probably one faculty member at my university. He was instrumental. As far as mentorship, no matter what has happened to me personally or professionally he has wavered strong for the profession, for my doctorate. (p.20, l. 8)

As their educational training increased and they established relationships with mentors, the counselor advocates reported solidifying their professional identity and becoming more involved in professional organizations. Gretchen reflected on how her relationships in her master’s program guided her into serving in the profession. When asked what led to her interest in advocating for the profession Gretchen acknowledged

I think that my mentorship relationship with people that I worked with at X university while I was working on my masters. Based on the fact that they were working in a lot of leadership type positions and roles and I wanted to get involved (p.2, l. 6).

In addition to professional endeavors, the participants each possessed personal characteristics such as a passion for the field and a sense of responsibility to assist the professions’ development. A great example of these characteristics was displayed by Jane. Jane declared “I just have a real passion for the profession and feel very very strongly that it is the best, that we are the best trained to provide mental health services
for the clients in need” (p. 2, l. 8). She goes on to say that the more her passion and responsibility to the profession increases the stronger her identity becomes.

Moreover, the participants reported experienced fear when they first began to advocate but as they gained confidence (often times as a result of increased education and awareness and through personal maturation) advocating became easier and they were more likely to advocate. Amanda, Tami, Heather, Jane, and Molly all discussed fear when speaking to legislative leaders about advocacy issues. They reported that fear limits counselors but that once they gain confidence the fear subsides and they become more active advocates. Tami also describes how her personal maturation affected her confidence and likelihood of advocating. Tami disclosed,

I think, personally for me, it is more about my stage of life. I think, if I was just out of my masters program, when I was in my late twenties, I would not have had the confidence or the moxy to do it, because I was a different person. I think that at different stages of life people aren’t aware of the impact they have (p. 17, l. 8). I just maybe didn’t have as much confidence in my own self when I was younger (p. 20, l. 13)

The participants shared similar personal experiences each of which was individualized to the person’s unique set of life circumstances. Amanda encapsulated this theme in one statement during her interview. When discussing the impact of personal experience on advocacy Amanda avowed,

I can’t discount some of the things that happened within my personal life they have had an effect and I can’t say which ways the personal things affect my professional efforts…. It is difficult being married and having kids. It is hard to be a woman. It is difficult to be an adult in a doc program. (p. 33, l.1)

Many of the participants discussed their family and how it impacted their advocacy efforts. Amanda, Molly, and Tami reported that they had family members who were directly involved in service to the government thus they had learned about advocacy via
their familial connection previous to entering the counseling field. In addition, several participants discussed how family impacted their advocacy. Jane reported taking time off from advocating to juggle the responsibilities of having teenage children at home. Molly reported that as much as she would love to be a full time advocate on Capitol Hill, she would never be able to achieve that because she has a family with a special needs son to take care of at home.

Moreover, several participants discussed how a void in their life impacted their journey. Amanda shared her personal experience about not obtain advocacy training during her master’s program which consequently affected the reason that she chose to teach at a particular university. Her personal experience inspired her to pass on her advocacy knowledge to the next generation of counselor advocates. Molly discussed how the lack of equality in the mental health field (i.e. counselors not getting compensated adequately) as part of the reason she started and continues to advocate for the profession.

Connecting findings to existing literature

This section will give a brief description of how the finding of this research related to the existing research. As described in chapter two, education, skills and qualities, and professional identity were highlighted in advocacy literature. This section will describe the similarities found in previous research and the current research.
Education

Education was one of the key elements that existing literature linked to advocacy. Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) and Moore Caira et al. (2003) found that advocacy training positively impacted advocacy efforts and attitudes. In Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter’s study about social workers and advocacy, the participants were found to have an increased sense of empowerment and an increase in their commitment to client empowerment after receiving graduate training which entailed advocacy preparation. The current research found a similar impact on counselors. Participants in the current research found that counselors reported gaining confidence and a sense of responsibility once they learned of the need for advocacy in the counseling profession. For example, Heather discussed how she gained confidence though her graduate training and how that initiated her advocating.

I think it is definitely the confidence issue. I think I started getting more confidence the further I went through the program. I’m guessing masters students advocate less because they might feel they might just not have the confidence (p. 22, l. 17).

Heather goes on to describe how her education impacted her awareness and confidence which in turn make her “noisier” about the injustices. Amanda discussed how after becoming educated about the need for professional advocacy at the ACA legislative institute training she felt responsible to dispense the knowledge to colleagues in her area. The empowerment and commitment to clients discussed in previous research are clearly parallel to constructs of confidence and sense of responsibility to the profession revealed in this research.
Although no previous research was conducted specifically on how counselors obtain advocacy training, the school counselors in Field and Baker’s (2004) study discussed ways that they learned of advocacy. The current research not only supported the positive impact of education on advocacy, but it also found that counselors do learn about advocacy in a variety of ways including through formal coursework, additional trainings, and through mentorship. One of Field and Baker’s participants also suggested that some counselors do not learn about advocacy but that they have an innate personality trait that leads them to advocate. Although this was not one of the initially suspected factors that impacts professional advocacy, it was found that certain personality characteristics affected an advocate’s journey to become an advocate for the counseling profession. This study found that people emphasized their passion, confidence, fear, and sense of responsibility as personality traits that impacted their advocacy efforts.

Although not a direct focus of this research, it is noteworthy to point out that Myers and Sweeney’s (2002) research found that obstacles to advocacy include lack of advocacy training and lack of awareness about advocacy issues. The participants in this research accentuated how they value advocacy training and several participants reported that they educated others to assist with eliminating these obstacles. Adam, Jane, and Amanda discussed techniques that they use to educate their students about advocacy.

Skills and qualities

Despite previous research identifying counseling skills as one element that affects advocacy. Participants in this study did not emphasize skills as one of the key factors
impacting advocacy. One reason this may have occurred is because it is a given that counselors automatically use their counseling skills to advocate for the counseling profession. As Sarah stated “it is more than a job it is a lifestyle” eluding that counselors utilize their skills involuntarily. The overlap of skill use in all life activities by counselor may have led to counselors overlooking when they actually sue their skills. Another reason that this might not have been a focus in this study is because skills are intertwined with education; all skills are learned and honed when in the graduate training program, tying education and skills together. Moreover, no specific question was asked about the type of skills (i.e. counseling verses political skills) that advocates used when advocating for the counseling profession.

As mentioned previously, Field and Baker’s (2004) study suggested that qualities may impact why a counselor advocates. The participants in this research study all listed five adjectives that described them. Despite listing specific characteristics on the demographic questionnaire, during the interview, participants highlighted different characteristics than their initial five. During the interview participants emphasized how passion, confidence, fear and a sense of responsibility impacted their advocacy. None of these characteristics have been examined in previous research.

Professional identity

Eriksen (1999) and Myers and Sweeney (2004) found that professional identity is a key component in advocacy. After interviewing advocates Eriksen’s stated that participants reported “A clear sense of professional identity is fundamental to advocacy
efforts, say counselors. Before people can successfully promote themselves as a group or individual, they need to know and have confidence in what they are promoting” (Eriksen, 1999, p. 37). The current research supports the findings that both identity and confidence positively impact advocacy efforts of counselors, as stated in Eriksen’s study. Myers and Sweeney found that advocacy is needed to strengthen professional identity. Heather’s statement about professional identity encapsulates how professional identity can impact professional advocacy. Heather declared “I think as my professional identity got stronger the more I felt the need to advocate” (p. 18, l. 3). When asked “do you think that the advocacy, passion or responsibility has increased as your professional identity has increased” Jane reported, “Yes! Yes! The more I know, the stronger my identity becomes, the more of an advocate I become” (p. 10, l. 3). Although not all of participants in this study so eloquently indicate that advocating increased their identity, they all discussed how their professional identity solidified as they became more educated and experienced.

In Hill, Bandfield, and White’s (2007) theoretical piece on how counselors develop into advocates for the profession the authors emphasized that as education increases counselor identity increases, which in turn increases advocacy efforts. The participants in this study indicated that this developmental approach did occur in their journey to become an advocate. The participant validations sent to the participants were summaries of their journey to become an advocate for the counseling profession. These validation statements indicated that all of the participants described developmental growth toward becoming an advocate. As education increased, characteristics and qualities developed, which in turn cultivated a professional identity which was coupled
with a sense of responsibility to the betterment of the profession. The means of
betterment chosen by the participants was professional advocacy. These participant
validation statements described the data in a developmental approach and all participants
agreed that the summary of their face-to-face interview accurately reflected the process of
becoming an advocate. Jane’s participant validation statement illustrates how the data
emerged with a developmental focus.

Your journey began as a master’s student. Your education and mentor initiated
your interest in advocacy which grew through professional experience. During
this time your mentor offered opportunities for you to become involved in
professional organizations. You reported that as your education increased your
professional identity increased. Furthermore you stated that once your identity
was solidified you sense of responsibility for the profession increased. You
attribute your increased advocacy efforts to your education, identity, mentorship
and professional involvement. In addition you credit your identity as an advocate
to attributes of your personality. You have participated in a variety of advocacy
agendas and you have advocated using numerous advocacy techniques. You take
great pride your advocacy and the impact you have on the next generations of
counselor advocates.

Although Jane’s is only one example, all the participant validation statements were very
similar, all emphasizing the development of a counselor advocate.

Additional findings from current research

This section will describe the finding of this research that have not been discussed
in existing advocacy literature. This section will give a brief description of the impact of
mentorship, professional involvement, and personal experiences have influence advocacy
for the counseling profession.
Mentorship

In addition to the three themes recognized in the literature review other factors were identified in the current research as aspects that affected counselor advocates’ process to become an advocate. One of the major contributions of the current research is its clear emphasis on the need for mentorship to cultivate professional advocates. Myers and Sweeney (2002) found that one of the obstacles to advocacy is the lack of advocacy leadership. All but one participant highlighted the tremendous importance of mentorship in their journey. Many participants revered their mentor as lighting the advocacy fire and stoking their passion. Adam went as far as stating “… I think those [trainings] are fine and they can be helpful but I don’t see them anywhere close to being as helpful as having a mentor” (p. 26, l. 2). Although the counseling profession has literature regarding the importance of mentorship, none of this research is specific to advocacy development or identity as an advocate for the profession.

Professional involvement

This research also expanded professional aspect beyond professional identity to include involvement in professional organizations. Research on advocacy tends to focus on counselors who are involved in professional organizations as is indicated in Myers and Sweeney (2002) and Eriksen (1999). However the focus was not on how their professional involvement impacted their process to become an advocate. This added
dynamic opens venues for future research about the impact of membership and leadership positions in professional organizations.

**Personal experiences**

Participants in this research revealed the impact of their personal life experiences on their advocacy journey. Each narrative had its own unique elements with similarities to other participants. All participants shared why they became advocates. Molly shared stories about her familial situation and her frustration with the status quo. Tami revealed that being surrounded by social workers in her agency and witnessing the disparity initiated her advocating for the counseling profession. These two distinctly different stories exemplify the unique situations that the counselor advocates experienced, but it also affirmed their passion for change. One unexpected finding of this research was revealed as part of the personal disclosure during the interviews. Several participants discussed the impact of their family on advocacy. Specifically, three participants revealed that their parents were involved in a political service role/position. During the interview the participants arrived at the finding that this advocacy modeling may be the underpinnings for why advocacy resonates within them. This research finding also builds a foundation for future researchers to utilize.
Implications of Findings

This study explored how counselors become advocates for the profession. This study’s findings appear to have several applications for future research as well as implications for the counseling profession. More specifically, this research has implications for organizations, counselor education programs, counselor educators, supervisors, mentors, students and individual counselors.

Oftentimes certain traditions or behaviors are carried on due to routine but there is no empirical rationale for the behaviors. This research reiterates the importance of many aspects in which the counseling profession and professionals are currently engaged. It further offers support and encouragement for situations in which outcome studies are not popular. This research is encouraging but also gives insight on the next step that the profession can take to better meet counselors’ needs and solidify advocacy as one element of their professional identity. The following section will identify implications at the macro and micro level.

Professional organizations and graduate training programs

The finding that education positively impacts advocacy efforts could have great implications for the counseling field. Although advocacy requirement have been in place in the Code of Ethics, the profession is currently transitioning to incorporate the new 2009 CACREP standards. Advocacy requirements are being added to counselor education programs via the 2009 CACREP standard requirements yet the new
requirements were not founded in research. There is minimal research about advocacy and education and what is available do not directly discuss the impact of training on advocacy efforts of counselors. This study clearly finds that advocacy training (formal and informal) positively impacts advocacy. This research can be used to further support the new additions to counselor education standards. Counseling programs can use these findings to support a rationale to develop advocacy specific courses and/or coursework to integrate throughout all courses.

With mentorship playing an integral part in helping counselors become advocates, organizations and counselor education program can use this research as rationale to start, strengthen, and/or continue mentorship initiatives. Often times education programs require that students have an advisor but this study reveals that a more in-depth relationship with a mentor may have a greater positive effect on counselor development, specifically development into an advocate for the counseling profession. Empirical evidence supporting the positive impact of mentorship may also encourage the counseling profession to offer, and possibly require, mentorship training programs to assist professionals in becoming effective mentors.

The findings regarding the importance of professional identity in this research reiterates what the counseling profession has known for decades, that one part of identity is that of the counselor-advocate. This research further supports the work that counseling organizations and training programs have been doing to solidify and improve counselors’ professional identity. These findings emphasize the profession should be encouraged to further examine how identity is affected by advocacy and vice versa. As Myers, Sweeney and White (2002) reported, a major criticism in the counseling profession is that
counselors cannot clearly define themselves. Expanding the scope of the counselor identity to include advocacy may be necessary because the counselors in this study incorporate advocacy as one of the components of their professional identity. Expanding the scope of a counselor could assist the profession in developing a core of qualified professionals who fortify a profession that assists marginalized and ill populations. Expanding the scope of professional identity could also further convolute the definition of a counselor and make it more difficult to determine the roles of counselors. This expansion could confuse counseling professionals about their roles and responsibilities as a counselor.

Organizations appear to know the positive impact that professional membership has on the profession and individual members, and they have developed a variety of ways for members to become involved including developing committees, networks, and branch organizations. This research supports the efforts that organizations have been putting forth in involving a variety of people in professional activities. Professional organizations could also note this research finding when listing the benefits of joining a professional organization. The findings about the importance of involvement in professional organizations can be utilized by organizations to seek more participation and contribution from members. Organizations could find ways to solidify the counselor-advocates professional identity by creating organizational positions in which they can use their advocate talents.

The findings that professional advocates display a set of personal characteristics could also greatly impact the counseling profession. If the profession values professional advocacy as much as the flagship organization claims, then this specific finding could
potentially have great implications. Identifying characteristics of effective advocates could impact who organizations accept as leaders and/or members and who programs accept as faculty and/or students. If the profession is truly committed to advocacy being a component of counselor identity as the Code of Ethics and CACREP guidelines suggest then new standards could be developed for who is titled, licensed, and certified as a “counselor”.

Counseling programs have techniques courses that students are required to take to strengthen their counseling skills. This research demonstrates that skills are not the only area that programs should monitor. There are other characteristics that counselor advocates possess. Having a list of characteristics could impact what areas that counselor training programs should concentrate on developing or improving. Similar findings in additional research may spark a need for additional coursework focused on improving personal characteristics or personality traits rather than, or in addition to, counselor techniques and skills.

Educators, supervisors, and mentors

Educators, supervisors, and mentors can have an impact on a global scale. One professor/supervisor/mentor encourages one student/supervisee/mentee, who advocates for the entire profession, the profession then advocates for clientele, who then function more effectively in society. These findings can be used by educators, supervisors, and mentors in three ways. First, this research can be used to affirm the importance of what many educators, supervisors, and mentors have been doing for decades. Second, this
information can also educate supervisor, educators, and mentors about the beneficial nature of their work and how they can affect their profession on multiple levels. Third, these results about mentorship can also be used to encourage or persuade educators, supervisors, and mentors to become better professionals by engaging in professional advocacy.

Knowing the influence that educators can have on counselors becoming advocates for the profession, educators can utilize this information to adapt their curriculum to include advocacy components, as stated in the 2009 CACREP standards. Additionally, educators can utilize their impact and incorporate other aspects found in this research. For example, knowing that professional involvement positively impacts becoming an advocate for the profession; educators can increase membership involvement, as required in the 2009 CACREP standards, to lead by example. They can also further emphasize the benefits of belonging to professional organizations and/or require membership as a course component. Educators know the impact of education, mentorship, professional involvement and personal experience on counselors. Despite their experiential knowledge, there has been no empirical research to support what many educators have been doing for years.

In addition to support, the findings from this study could also encourage educators, supervisors, and mentors. The information about the ways that counselor advocates learn about advocacy (formal, CEU trainings, etc.) could inspire educators to not only include advocacy into course activities, but also offer trainings about advocacy that are designed to meet the needs of clinical and school counselors in addition to students, counselor educators, and mentors. This research could encourage educators and
supervisors who are not mentors to engage in meaningful mentoring relationships. Professionals who already engage in mentoring relationships can use these finding to tailor their mentorship techniques. For examples, knowing that mentees learn about advocacy from mentors: mentors can broach the topic of advocacy with mentees and/or collaborate on advocacy agendas with mentees.

As mentioned previously, this research could be inspirational. Knowing that professional involvement has enhanced professional identity and advocacy in counselor advocates, professionals may be encouraged to become more active within professional organizations, leading by example. Knowing that it can strengthen their identity as a counselor advocate and that it has a positive effect on becoming an advocate for the profession, this research may persuade to educators, supervisors, and mentors to apply for leadership positions in professional organizations and to mentor novice professionals in such organizations. For example, as an executive member in a professional organization one may ask a student or mentee to attend a professional meeting, invite them to co-present at a professional conference, or invite them to become involved as a committee member within an organization.

Students and individual counselors

The findings about the impact of education on counselor advocacy also has implications for students and professional counselors. The finding that advocacy education increases advocacy could encourage students and counselors to seek training programs and organizations that are suited to their advocacy needs. For example, a
student may choose a graduate training program that has a course designated around advocacy for the counseling profession. This same student may also choose to be a member of the American Counseling Association because they know that the ACA conference offers training on advocacy. On another note, this research could encourage individual professors who already have a strong counselor advocacy identity to seek employment opportunities at universities that do not focus on advocacy because they are interested in inspiring the program to incorporate advocacy training. This was a true account from a participant in this study, Amanda.

The individual accounts of how counselor advocates sought education outside of graduate training programs could also encourage students to take responsibility for their education and seek opportunities outside of their training programs. Participants’ accounts of obtaining training outside of formal training programs could also encourage professional counselors, who have completed their graduate training before CACREP standards and the code of ethics included advocacy, to seek training and continuing education units about advocacy.

On an individual level, the finding that mentorship positively impacts advocacy may spark individual responsibility for students and professional counselors. This knowledge may lead apprehensive counselors and/or students to appreciate the benefits of mentorship and seek a mentor who can foster their growth as a counselor/student and as an advocate for the counseling profession. It may also encourage advanced students and professional counselors to seek novice counselors/students and become a mentor to them.
As much as this study supports counselors who identify with advocacy as part of their professional being, it could also make individuals who do not resonate with the advocacy component feel inferior. Myers, Sweeny, and White (2002) stated that a lack of unified identity not only impacts individual advocacy efforts but it also affects the credibility of counselors. Adding an advocacy component to counselors’ professional identity could perpetuate a lack of unified professional identity within the profession having a detrimental effect on individuals and the profession. On the contrary, if counselors acknowledged advocacy as a fundamental piece of identity, advocacy efforts would increase because counselors would know that advocacy is part of their responsibility and function as a counselor.

Often times, students identify skill sets that they have which make them “appropriate” for a particular profession. For example, students who think they are good listeners and give good advice might seek graduate work in the counseling profession, whereas persons who think concretely and are good with numbers may seek training in mathematics. This research demonstrates that counselor advocates possess a variety of characteristics, most of which have not been studied in the counseling literature previously. This list could expand or change what people view as “appropriate” characteristics for counselors. Having a list of such qualities could also have a detrimental effect. Such a list could discourage people without these characteristics from pursuing careers in the counseling profession despite their counselor-like abilities and skills. It could also encourage people who had not previously considered this profession to see counseling as an optimal profession to select. As much as this list of counselor advocate qualities could encourage and promote counselors who have these qualities, it
could also make counselors who do not have such characteristics feel inadequate. Having a list of characteristics could also impact what areas of self growth students and counseling professionals focus on improving.

As previously mentioned, the reiteration that counselors all encounter differing personal experiences yet they share similar interests and goals, solidifies that not all people should be grouped according to one particular life incident. The finding about the impact of personal influences on counselor advocates could perhaps initiate the standard of all counseling students participating in personal counseling during their graduate training programs to assist with personal issues that arise. The requirement to attend personal counseling currently occurs in many programs but with the results of this research empirically demonstrating that personal experiences do affect counselor which may demonstrate the need for personal counseling in graduate training programs.

Overall implications

One of the largest implications that can be taken from this study is how counseling professionals conceptualize advocacy. This study gives insight into a variety of elements that affect counselors becoming advocates for the counseling profession, proving that the profession should not view one element as the sole factor but to conceptualize the process of becoming an advocate more from a developmental perspective. Changing this conceptualization could affect how counselors view, teach, supervise, and practice advocacy. For example, what are the ethical parameters surrounding advocacy? If a novice professional is encouraged by their program,
organizations, and educational standards to advocacy and this advocacy endeavor causes professional or personal damage, who is responsible? Currently, the profession approaches advocacy from the point of view that all counselors should advocate regardless of their education or skill level, as stated in the ACA Code of Ethics and the 2009 CACREP standards. If advocacy is viewed as a developmental part of counselors’ identity that is developed during graduate training programs then it can be taught, mentored, and possibly even supervised. Are there models of advocacy development similar to those in supervision? From a developmental perspective should novice advocates be treated similar to supervision students or novice professionals needing supervision? How much do novice advocates differ from advocacy experts? Changing how the profession conceptualizes advocacy has the potential to change how advocacy is approached, viewed, and practiced.

Limitations of the Research

This study yielded great insight into the journey of counselors to become advocates for the counseling profession. Nevertheless, this study has specific limitations that should be noted. Limitations include that of participant selection, back yard research, research design.

In this study, I intended on exploring the experiences of expert, counselor advocates for the profession. The participants were chosen because they attended the State legislative training institute. Attendees of this institute were thought to have advocacy interest, training specifically about advocating for the profession, and possibly
hands on advocacy experience at the legislative institute. Upon reviewing the list of institute attendees, I realized that many of the attendees were students. As an active advocate in the state, I also recognized that many influential expert advocates did not attend the training institute. Despite the logical reasoning for choosing training institute attendees, it may have limited the participants to beginning advocates who were seeking to learn more about advocacy rather than expert advocates.

As a counselor advocate, my involvement in the profession is vast. One of the limitations of this study is the participants’ familiarity with me. Of the eight participants, I had met five of the participants prior to the interview. I did not have a personal relationship with any of the participants but I had met them formally as a result of professional encounters. This familiarity could have led them to answer in a way that they might not have answered had they not known the interviewer. Being that advocacy is revered as a valued activity in the counseling profession, the participants may have felt that they must have a desirable response to the questions.

This study only examined counselor advocates at the time of the interview. Many of the participants expressed that on an advocacy continuum they still have a far way to travel. Amanda even expressed how her experiences and views have changed throughout her graduate training. She stated that you might get a different response depending on when you asked the questions. “If you would have asked me in a different year over this period of time [time in the graduate training program] what is the most important, I would have told you different things…”, Amanda affirmed (p. 34, l. 2). Choosing a longitudinal design for this research may have provided a more accurate picture of how the individuals experienced changed across time and as their education, training,
experience (personal and professional) has increased and/or changed. A cross-sectional design may have also yielded additional information about advocates at their different stages.

Recommendations for Future Research

The data revealed by this research opens many doors for future researchers. Future researchers could conduct a similar study using a longitudinal or cross-sectional design, as mentioned previously. Using different designs could offer additional information that was not salient in this case study design. Future researchers could assess the advocacy experiences of master’s degree students and compare that to doctoral level students. This research could focus on the degree that education impacts advocacy. One could also compare students to professional counselors or to counselor educators. A comparative study exploring the differences and similarities between social work or psychologist advocates and counselor advocates may also feature useful information about professional identity and advocacy. Comparing how there different mental health professional define advocating for the profession may also be insightful.

Researchers could examine each of the themes found in this study for additional information. Exploring education to determine what types of education are more influential on counselor advocates could call attention to the need for advocacy curriculum. For example, is a course about advocacy more influential then infusing advocacy in several courses, or are training institutes more powerful than advocacy workshops offered by state and national organizations? Future researchers could also
explore the impact of mentorship at different levels. Exploring mentorship in educational programs versus in a counseling agency setting would be an interesting avenue to investigate. An additional study may delve into why each of the participants used adjectives to describe themselves on the demographic questionnaire yet these are not the characteristics that were discussed directly during their interview. It would also be of interest to explore why participants did not discuss counseling skills. Do counselors identify a set of advocacy skills that are separate from traditional counseling skills?

The unexpected relationship of counselor advocates having familial ties to government and advocacy further allows for a new avenue of research for future researchers. Researchers can investigate to determine if other expert advocates share this familial attribute. If they do share such an attribute it may lead to exploring what other familial attributes impact their interest in advocacy. Being that professional advocacy research is uncharted territory in the counseling literature; the opportunities for future research are endless.

Future researchers could also explore how counselor advocates conceptualize and implement the advocacy components found in the CACREP standards and the code of ethics. Does education impact how counselor advocacy interpret the CACREP standards and ethical codes? Do educators, mentors, and supervisors discuss the sections related to advocacy in the CACREP standards and code of ethics? Are professionals who are involved in professional organizations more likely to be aware of the advocacy requirements within the profession? Being that the research on advocating for the profession is slim at best, the questions regarding professional advocacy are endless, allowing for endless future research.
Summary

This qualitative case study offered a great deal of information about what influenced a counselor’s journey to become an advocate for the profession of counseling. This research highlighted four keys areas that impacted advocacy development including education, mentorship, professional aspects, and personal aspects. These findings supported several elements discussed in previous research and featured aspects that have not previously been explored. The results of this research can be used as a stepping stone for future researchers.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Research Title: An Investigation of the Process of Becoming an Advocate for the Counseling Profession: Personal Experiences of Advocates.

Principal Investigator (Researcher): Marisa L. White, MS, LPC, CDCA, NCC
Location: University of Akron

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Marisa L. White, a doctoral student in the Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral program, at The University of Akron. The purpose of this research is to examine how counselors develop into advocates for the counseling profession. Approximately ten professional advocates will be interviewed about their experiences becoming an advocate.

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to complete a one hour face-to-face interview with the researcher. Additional follow-up interviews, face-to-face or telephone, may be conducted for additional exploration and clarification of information shared in the initial interview. The answers you provide will be kept confidential and you will not be asked to give identifying information.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. If you participate in this study there is no direct benefit to you. I hope that the information learned from this study will benefit the counseling profession by understanding more about the process of becoming an advocate for the counseling profession. Your participation in this study is voluntary and refusal to participate or withdraw from the study at any time will involve no penalty.

Interviews will be digitally recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Any identifying information collected will be kept in a secure location and only the researcher and her dissertation committee will have access to the data. Participants will not be individually identified in any publication or presentation of the research results. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants. In addition, signed consent form will be kept separate for all data, and individual responses will not be linked to individual participants.
For questions or concerns about the study, please call the researcher, Marisa L. White, at 330-854-3128 or email her at mw38@uakron.edu. You may also contact Ms. White’s dissertation Chair, Dr. John Queener at 330-972-6149 or queener@uakron.edu. This project has also been reviewed and approved by The University of Akron Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the IRB at 330-972-7666 or 1888-232-8790.

**Consent to Participate in the Study**

I have read the information provided above and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

__________________________________________
Printed Name

__________________________________________  __________________
Participant’s Signature      Date
APPENDIX B
INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Dear Colleague,

Hello, my name is Marisa L. White. I am a candidate for the doctoral degree in Counselor Education and Supervision at The University of Akron. I am interested in exploring how counselors become advocates for the counseling profession. You have been identified as an advocate for the profession and I am interested in understanding your experience becoming an advocate.

I am emailing you to offer you the opportunity to contribute to the field by participating in my research study. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a one hour face-to-face interview at a location of your choice. The interview will consist of questions about your process of becoming an advocate for the counseling profession. At a later date you may also be asked to participate in follow-up interviews via face-to-face, telephone, or email.

If you are interested in participating please email me with your contact information and a copy of your curriculum vita or resume to confirm your interest. Interested participants should respond by May 25, 2008.

Thank you,
Marisa L. White, MS, LPC, NCC, CDCA (Principle Investigator)
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APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee (Title and Name): ________________________________

Interviewer: Marisa L. White

Interview Protocol

To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to digitally record our conversations today. For your information, only my dissertation committee and I will be privy to the tapes which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed.

Please sign the consent form that details information about your participation in this study. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

Do you have any questions before we get started? Thank you for your agreeing to participate. I have planned this interview to last approximately one hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover.

Introduction

You have been identified as someone who has experience as an advocate for the counseling profession. This interview will focus on your process of becoming an advocate for the counseling profession. I will start off by asking you background information and about your professional history which will be followed by questions concerning advocacy. This study does not aim to evaluate your experiences. Rather, I am trying to learn more about your professional journey toward becoming a professional advocate.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you define professional advocacy?
2. Explain what led to your interest in advocacy

3. What meaning does advocating for the profession have for you?
   3a. What does advocating do for you on an intrinsic level?
   3b. Why have you chosen to take the extra step to advocate for the causes instead of allowing others to do the work?

4. Describe your first experience advocating for the profession.

5. Why do you think your first attempt occurred at that particular time?

6. What led you to choose that particular method of advocacy for your first attempt?
   5a. Have you used numerous advocacy techniques/methods?
   5b. What impacts your choice of advocacy method?

7. Have you ever taken time out from advocating?
   6a. If so, what led to the break?
   6b. If not, what do you attribute to the keeping you motivated?

8. Why do you think other counselors do not advocate for the profession?

9. What type of activities do you think demonstrate advocating for the profession
   9a. Why did you choose these activities?

10. Last question: Do you think that based on our conversation that you have walked me through the process on becoming an advocate for the profession?
    10a. Are there any points that need clarification?
    10b. Is there any additional information you would like to add?

Question starters to probe for more information:
   Can you describe a situation where…
   Can you tell me a little more about that…
   What was that like for you…
   In which ways….
Contact Information:
Address: _________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________

Phone numbers:|____________________________________________________

Primary Email:_____________________________________________________
Secondary Email: ___________________________________________________

Please circle the answer that describes you the best:

1. Age _________
2. Sex
   a. male
   b. female
3. Ethnicity
   a. Caucasian
   b. African American
   c. Asian
   d. Hispanic
   e. Other ______________________________________________________
4. Income (total household income)
   a. under 20,000
   b. 21,000-30,000
   c. 31,000-40,000
   d. 41,000-50,000
   e. 51,000-60,000
   f. 61,000-70,000
   g. 71,000-80,000
   h. 81,000-90,000
   i. 91,000-100,000
   j. < 100,000

5. Education level
   a. Currently in a counseling Masters program
   b. Currently in a counseling Ph D program
   c. Obtained a Masters degree in counseling
   d. All but Dissertation (ABD)
   e. Obtained a PhD in a counseling related field
   f. Other ______________________________________________________

6. Years of clinical experience
   a. Practicum and/or internship
   b. Post graduate 0-3 years
c. 4-6 years

d. 7-10

e. 11-15

f. More than 15 years experience

Please circle ALL answers that apply:

7. In what settings do you have clinical experience?

   a. community mental health agency
   b. hospital
   c. private practice
   d. college counseling clinic
   e. school (elementary through high school)
   f. other ________________________________

8. What counseling related licenses do you currently hold?

   a. None. I am not licensed
   b. Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)
   c. Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC – independently licensed)
   d. Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor – Supervision designation (LPCCS)
   e. Licensed School Counselor
   f. Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor
g. Licensed Rehabilitation Counselor

h. Licensed Social Worker (LSW)

i. Licensed Clinical Independent Social Worker (LCISW)

j. Psychologist

k. Other _________________________

9. What counseling related certifications do you currently hold?
   a. None: I hold no certifications
   b. Certified School Counselor (CSC)
   c. Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC)
   d. Chemical Dependency certification
   e. Other _________________________
   f. Other _________________________
   g. Other _________________________

10. Which subcategories do you identify as your specialty area?
   a. Community counseling
   b. School counseling
   c. Mental health counseling
   d. Rehabilitation counseling
   e. Marriage and Family therapy
   f. Counselor Education and Supervision
   g. Counseling Psychology
h. Other ______________________________________________________

11. Select ALL of the ways in which you learned how to advocate for the counseling profession.
   a. I learned about advocating for the counseling profession through trial and error
   b. I learned about advocating for the counseling profession by taking a formal course that focused on advocacy in graduate training program
   c. I learned about advocating for the counseling profession in a class that was not solely focused on advocacy.
   d. I learned how to advocate for the counseling profession by watching others advocate
   e. I learned about advocating for the counseling profession by attending education sessions and seminars (that were related to professional advocacy) at professional conferences
   f. I learned about advocating for the counseling profession from a mentor
   g. Other ______________________________________________________
   h. Other ______________________________________________________

12. List all organizations in which you are a member. Please spell out all local, state, regional, and national organizations. For example, American Counseling Association, National Board of Certified Counselors, etc.
    ______________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________
13. List 5 adjectives that you believe describe you as a person.

   a. __________________________________________________________
   b. __________________________________________________________
   c. __________________________________________________________
   d. __________________________________________________________
   e. __________________________________________________________
APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

Date: May 9, 2008

To: Maria L. White
880 Basswood Ave.
Canal Fulton, Ohio 44614

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 20080505
“The Process of Becoming an Advocate for the Counseling Profession: A Qualitative Analysis of Counselor Advocacy”

Thank you for submitting your Exemption Request for the referenced study. Your request was approved on May 9, 2008. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ Exemption 1 - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☒ Exemption 2 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 - Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study’s design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Cc: John Queener - Advisor
Cc: Rosalie Hall - IRB Chair

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
330-972-7066 • 330-972-0281 Fax

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☒ Approved consent form/s enclosed