ACADEMIC ENTITLEMENT AND COUNSELOR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AS

PREDICTORS OF COUNSELOR TRAINEES' SELF-EFFICACY

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty of The University of Akron

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctorate of Philosophy

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December 2022

ACADEMIC ENTITLEMENT AND COUNSELOR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AS

PREDICTORS OF COUNSELOR TRAINEES' SELF-EFFICACY


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Dissertation



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# ABSTRACT

The relationship that academic entitlement and professional identity have with self-efficacy has been studied in previous research, but how these constructs are associated within the counseling literature is lacking. The present study investigated whether academic entitlement (as measured by two subscales of the Academic Entitlement Scale) and/or professional identity (as measured by three subscales of the Professional Identity Scale in Counseling – Short Form) are predictors of counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale) among a sample population ($N = 97$) of counselor trainees from across the United States. Results of a hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed that two traits of professional identity, Professional Knowledge and Attitude toward Profession, were significant positive predictors of counseling self-efficacy. These results indicated that when counselor trainees are knowledgeable about and/or possess a positive perspective regarding the counseling profession, it is associated with stronger beliefs in the ability to effectively counsel a client. However, the traits of academic entitlement examined in the present study were not significant predictors of counseling self-efficacy. Implications for self-efficacy theory, counselor trainees, counseling practice, counselor educators and supervisors, and future research were discussed.

DEDICATION

To my sons Zakkai and Elias, the two of you will never know how much you inspired me throughout my doctoral journey. The thought of creating a better life for my sons was what kept me going when I questioned my ability to successfully complete this process. It is my hope the opportunities that have resulted from the completion of my degree provide avenues for the two of you to chase down your dreams and aspirations. May my dissertation be an example of hard work, resiliency, and dedication as the two of you seek to accomplish your goals in life.

This dissertation is also dedicated to the legacy of both sets of my grandparents: Jake Simmons (d. 2017), Betty Simmons (d. 2020), Dave Ray (d. 2021) and Beverly Ray. The faith-based values the four of you engrained in our family was my peace throughout the completion of my dissertation and doctoral degree. Each of you have a unique contribution to the person I am today, and each of those contributions have been vital to my success. Thank you for being examples of how to live and lead well.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation committee members, Dr. Varunee Faii Sangganjanavanich, Dr. Yue Dang, Dr. David Tefteller, and Dr. Seungbum Lee. Your feedback greatly contributed to the success of my research. I appreciate the time and effort you were willing to invest in this process. I also want to express my gratitude to my advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Robert Schwartz, for your guidance throughout my doctorate and the dissertation process. You held me to a standard of excellence which greatly contributed to my personal and professional development.

To my friends and colleagues, your accountability has been vital for my success. Specifically, I want to say thank you to the members of my cohort. Each of you demonstrated you were just as invested in my success as you were your own. The camaraderie within our cohort was one of the main reasons I was able to remain resilient throughout this journey. I would also like to say thank you to my peers, Dr. Christina Woloch, and Dr. Christy McCrone. The two of you have been mentors to me. Even after you finished up your doctoral degrees, you still checked-in on me and were willing to provide guidance.

Lastly, I want to thank my family for their support. To my wife, Adrianna Ray, I am thankful for your steadfast grace and love. There were moments I had to sacrifice time together to work on my dissertation, but you never once hesitated to show your support for me. To the rest of my family, your encouragement has been invaluable.

Whether it was encouraging me to take a break, or to work harder, you all have been

there for me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, self-efficacy has been an important emerging construct being researched within higher education and professional career success more specifically (Dinther et al., 2011). Within healthcare professions, the importance of self-efficacy has been highlighted among professional counselors and trainees. For example, past research has provided evidence for the significance of examining self-efficacy among counselor trainees' (CTs) skill development in graduate programs. CTs' degree of self-efficacy has also been associated with motivation to achieve professional goals, preparedness for the counseling profession, performance in the counseling profession, and reduced risk of future burnout (Aliyev & Tunc, 2015; Jaafar et al., 2009). CTs' degree of self-efficacy may also be directly impacted by their completion of graduate coursework. Mullen et al. (2015) found that graduate coursework was a great contributor to the development CTs' counseling self-efficacy and their ability to develop professional competencies needed to be an effective counselor. However, prior research has highlighted that certain additional factors may reinforce or inhibit CTs' degree of self-efficacy.

One of the constructs examined as a potential inhibitor of CTs' degree of self-efficacy was academic entitlement. Academic entitlement in the present study was

operationalized as CTs' expecting academic success, but not taking responsibility for the achievement of success. Character traits of individuals who are academically entitled may include lack of personal responsibility for success and higher reliance on others for successful outcomes (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). Due to these traits, the lack of confidence academically entitled individuals possess for completion of tasks could potentially have adverse effects on CTs' counseling self-efficacy. Another construct examined in the present study was counselor professional identity.

Counselor professional identity was operationalized in the present study as CTs' being able to identify with the counseling profession through knowledge of the profession, understanding and carrying out the role of a counselor, and engaging with the profession (e.g., interacting with professionals, attending conferences, participating and practicing research; Woo & Henfield, 2015). CTs' who have a higher degree of professional identity may possess a greater belief and confidence in their abilities to perform their professional role (Moss et al., 2014; Woo et al., 2017). Low professional identity therefore may adversely impact counseling self-efficacy. The ways professional identity and/or academic entitlement influence self-efficacy will be discussed further.

Higher degree of academic entitlement and lower degree of professional identity have similar characteristics. Those who are academically entitled lack personal responsibility and confidence for obtaining successful outcomes when completing tasks (Boswell, 2012; Chowning & Campbell, 2009). Academic entitlement has been linked to traits of decreased engagement and incivility with others (Cain et al., 2012). Each of these traits can have a negative impact. Academic entitlement has been found to be negatively correlated with self-efficacy. Higher academic entitlement may result in lower

levels of self-efficacy (Boswell, 2012). A lower degree of professional identity has also been associated with a lack of responsibility for professional development and a lack of confidence in their skills (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014; Woo et al., 2017). It has been supported that professional identity has been found to have a positive interaction with various forms of self-efficacy. Increased counselor professional identity can reinforce a higher degree of self-efficacy (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Heled & Davidovitch, 2021; Moss et al., 2014). Academic entitlement and low professional identity have an impact on self-efficacy, but research is lacking on how these constructs interact with counseling self-efficacy, specifically. The impact these constructs have on counseling self-efficacy were explored in the present study. However, how academic entitlement and counselor professional identity reinforce or inhibit counseling self-efficacy were studied separately in the present study. The interaction between academic entitlement and professional identity was not examined. Whether or not academic entitlement and/or professional identity predict counseling self-efficacy was examined separately.

The present study explored if academic entitlement and/or counselor professional identity are predictors of counseling self-efficacy among CTs. There appears to be a degree of association between the constructs of academic entitlement, professional identity, and self-efficacy paired separately, but not researched together, and not among those practicing the counseling profession. The present study examined these relationships further. Through the present study, counselor educators may gain a better understanding of whether counseling students' degree of academic entitlement and/or professional identity impact their progression as learners. Supervisors may better understand methods to help CTs develop self-efficacy when practicing counseling. CTs

themselves may gain self-assessment methods beyond direct skills development and feedback, resulting in enhanced self-efficacy and thus academic and clinical success (Kozina et al., 2010). To better understand the relationship between each of the aforementioned constructs, each construct will be expounded upon individually.

## Overview of Self-Efficacy

The construct of self-efficacy is defined as one's beliefs about their future ability to accomplish a given task (Bandura, 1995). Bandura (1997) described self-efficacy as a phenomenon which is multifaceted as there are various ways individuals form beliefs about their capabilities to carry out the actions needed to complete tasks. Through the theory of self-efficacy, Bandura described the process of how beliefs regarding efficacy have a conditional relationship with outcome expectancy; that is, the degree of a person's self-efficacy influences their ability to perform a given task. Research has continued to support the theory that degree of self-efficacy is a predictor of level of performance when completing tasks (Jaafar et al., 2009; Larson & Daniels, 1998). Williams and Rhodes (2016) discussed how self-efficacy also explains, in addition to predicts, the level of motivation people have in completing tasks. In other words, if someone has low self-efficacy, and does not feel confident in their ability to perform a task or achieve a goal, then they will have low motivation to perform or achieve their goals. In the present study, the particular form of self-efficacy examined pertains to the practice of counseling, counseling self-efficacy. The way counseling self-efficacy influences CTs' behaviors can be understood through the sources of self-efficacy.

**Sources of Self-Efficacy for Counselor Trainees (CTs)**

Bandura (1977) stated that there are four sources of self-efficacy. First, performance accomplishment/mastery experience, was described as an individual successfully completing a task and gaining confidence in their ability to effectively execute a given course of action. Secondly, vicarious experience, is an individual witnessing others completing tasks successfully and believing they could be able to do it as well (Bandura & Barab, 1973). Thirdly, verbal persuasion, also referred to as social persuasion (Bandura, 1977, 1997), is described as a process in which an individual's belief in their capability to complete a task is enhanced through various forms of social encouragement. Fourthly, emotional arousal was described as interpreting competency based on emotional states during or after the completion of a task (Bandura, 1977). Each of these sources of self-efficacy can uniquely contribute to the development of CTs' counseling self-efficacy.

Counseling self-efficacy may be defined as one's belief in their future ability to effectively counsel a client (Larson & Daniels, 1998). Performance accomplishment for CTs comes from engaging in the practice of counseling clients. Practicing counseling skills with clients, and modeling the skills of instructors/supervisors, may enhance CTs' self-efficacy (Mullen et al., 2015). Opportunities for performance accomplishment will come from the practicum or internship phase of CTs' education. Observing others' practice of counseling skills may also be beneficial for the development of CTs' counseling self-efficacy.

Vicarious experience is gained when CTs observe their peers, or other counseling professionals (e.g., instructors or supervisor), providing counseling services. This

exposure may resolve anxiety related to counseling practice as repetitive exposure

provides an opportunity to gain experience and knowledge of how to implement

counseling skills into sessions (Mullen et al., 2015; Ooi et al., 2018). When observing

others performing counseling skills, and being observed by others as CTs perform

counseling skills, an opportunity for feedback may be provided.

Verbal persuasion occurs when CTs receive feedback on their ability to perform

counseling skills from peers, instructors, supervisors, and clients (Borders et al., 2012;

Ikonomopoulos et al., 2016). Opportunities for enhancing counseling self-efficacy can

occur through positive and negative feedback; positive feedback pertaining to skills that

were performed well, and negative feedback are comments on skills that need to be

enhanced. How this feedback is communicated may influence whether counseling self-

efficacy is enhanced. Feedback that enhances CTs' self-efficacy is dependent upon

appropriately communicated feedback by the observer and CTs' receptiveness to

feedback (Borders et al., 2012). During feedback, and the practice of counseling,

emotional arousal may occur.

Emotional arousal is the range of emotions one may experience while performing

counseling skills. Managing experiences of physiological arousal while performing

counseling related tasks is necessary for CTs to perform tasks effectively (Motley et al.,

2014). Experiencing high levels of emotional arousal, especially negative emotions, for

extended periods of time can decrease self-efficacy. Reducing or addressing how the

individual experiences moments of physiological arousal may lead to greater self-efficacy

(Kirk et al., 2011; Ng & Lucianetti, 2016).  The importance of counseling self-efficacy is

demonstrated by the impact each of these sources of self-efficacy have on CTs'
development.

**Importance of Self-Efficacy**

Counseling self-efficacy is an important construct of study as the degree of self-efficacy possessed by CTs can have major implications. Self-efficacy has been associated with level of performance in counseling (e.g., counseling effectively and perception of skills), client outcomes, burnout, and professional identity development (Aliyev & Tunc, 2015; Flasch et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2010; Jaafar et al., 2009; Larson & Daniels, 1998; Urbani et al., 2002). Due to the impact self-efficacy can have on CTs and the counseling profession, it is imperative to understand what constructs may predict low self-efficacy. The present study aimed to aid in understanding how the constructs of academic entitlement and/or professional identity may predict CTs' degree of counseling self-efficacy.

## Overview of Academic Entitlement

Chowning and Campbell (2009) defined academic entitlement as "the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success" (p. 982). Academic entitlement should not be confused with general entitlement. Jeffres et al. (2014) differentiated academic entitlement from general entitlement by discussing how general entitlement is a person perceiving themselves as superior to others. Academic entitlement is based on a student viewing themselves as a customer and their education being the product. This consumeristic attitude contributes to the perception that because education was a product that was paid for, the student feels entitled to obtaining their degree regardless of their performance. In other words,

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academically entitled students may perceive the tuition they paid for their education as purchasing their diploma (Kopp et al., 2011). In short, general entitlement is based on internalized perception of superiority and academic entitlement is an externalized perception (Jeffres et al., 2014; Knepp, 2016). Externalized responsibility and entitled expectations have been supported as two subgroup characteristics of academic entitlement (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Jeffres et al., 2014).

**Characteristics of Academic Entitlement**

Externalized responsibility includes when an individual possesses the belief that the outcome of their education and the process of learning is solely dependent upon others, such as professors, the university, or classmates (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Jeffres et al., 2014). Those who possess externalized responsibility for the outcome of their education have been described as lacking personal responsibility for their performance (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). Lack of personal responsibility can negatively impact academic performance, such as grades on homework and exams, and self-efficacy for academic performance (Anderson et al., 2013; Boswell, 2012; Jeffres et al., 2014). A rationale for these adverse effects has been contributed to a lack of internal locus of control and feeling there is nothing the student can do to impact one's performance or grade (Knepp, 2016). Externalized responsibility may contribute to the entitled expectations characteristic of academic entitlement.

Entitled expectations are focused on the classroom setting (e.g., grading strategies and grading policies); a belief that professors should accommodate their needs and preferences in the classroom setting and adjust grading strategies accordingly (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Jeffres et al., 2014). For example, an entitled expectation may include

the perceptions that professors should be entertaining when instructing a course and should be willing to curve grades in students' favor. Individuals who have entitled expectations may be described as inflexible, self-serving, disengaged, easily offended, and possessing faulty expectations of college-level work (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Knepp, 2016).

**Importance of Examining Academic Entitlement**

To date, no study has been found investigating the academic entitlement of counseling students or the relationship academic entitlement may have with counseling self-efficacy. Research has been conducted on academic entitlement and the adverse effects to general undergraduate and graduate students, but not specifically with graduate-level counseling students. Previous research has reported that students with a high degree of academic entitlement may have low academic self-efficacy and perform poorly in courses (Boswell, 2012; Frey, 2015). During a master's program in counseling, courses that CTs must complete are practicum and internship. If a CT has a high degree of academic entitlement, it is possible their performance in the practicum and internship courses may be impacted. Therefore, it was important the interaction between these two constructs was examined further. The present study investigated if CTs' degree of academic entitlement was a predictor of their counseling self-efficacy.

## Overview of Professional Identity

Professional identity is the interpersonal and intrapersonal interaction between a person and their professional community (Gibson et al., 2010). Professional identity is a context specific construct as it is associated with the personal and professional growth

within a specific profession (Moss et al., 2014). The present study will examine the construct of counselor professional identity.

The counseling profession has struggled to define a unified conceptualization of counselor professional identity due to various professional roles, differences in training programs, and a multitude of theoretical approaches to providing counseling services (Mellin et al., 2011). There has been an emphasis on discerning a unified understanding of a professional identity in counseling as possessing a professional identity is necessary for the "counseling profession to flourish" (Woo & Henfield, 2015, p. 93). Woo and Henfield (2015) expounded upon the description of counselor professional identity by describing traits of the construct: identifying with the counseling profession through professional knowledge, knowing the philosophy of the profession, demonstrates expertise and a professional role, considers attitude towards the profession and self, engages with the counseling profession, and interacts with other counseling professionals. Gibson et al. (2010) discussed how professional identity can be captured through three main themes. First, labeling oneself as a professional by viewing oneself as a professional in their profession. Secondly, integrating values and skills by finding the congruence between one's personal and professional self. Lastly, involvement in a professional community by feeling connected to and interacting with a professional community. For CTs to effectively develop their professional identity, specific tasks have been highlighted by prior authors.

**Tasks for Counselor Professional Identity Development**

Gibson et al. (2010) developed a theory of transformational tasks which emphasized three tasks that must be accomplished for CTs to develop their counselor

professional identity: developing a definition of counseling, taking responsibility for one's professional growth, and having a systemic identity. By progressing through each of these tasks a transformational process may occur, "a movement from external validation, through course work, experience, and commitment, to self-validation" (Gibson et al., 2010, p. 28). Gibson and colleagues described each of these tasks. Developing a definition of counseling is a process where CTs develop their own internalized definition of counseling instead of mirroring other experts' (e.g., course instructors, supervisors, colleagues) definition of counseling. Taking responsibility for professional growth is transitioning from relying on external sources to learn about the counseling profession and developing an internal drive and self-accountability to learn about the profession. Lastly, having a systematic identity begins with CTs' understanding their unique skillset and qualities, and how these traits integrate with the professional counseling community as a whole. Because there is evidence for these tasks being important for professional identity development, it is important to further examine other constructs which may interact with, or be influenced by, professional identity.

**Importance of Examining Professional Identity**

It is not uncommon for CTs to doubt their ability to provide counseling services (Flasch et al., 2016; Ikonomopoulos et al., 2016; Kurtyilmaz, 2015). Counselor professional identity is an important construct to study as it directly impacts counselors' belief and confidence to perform their professional roles in counseling (Moss et al., 2014; Woo et al., 2017). The development of the CTs' self-efficacy and professional identity throughout their master programs has been studied separately (Mullen et al., 2015; Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Increased professional identity and self-efficacy of CTs are linked to the

experiences gained throughout counselor training programs (Folkes-Skinner et al., 2010).

Research has indicated that as CTs advance through semesters of practicum and

internship, their professional identity develops (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). As CTs enter their

respective programs and transition from coursework to clinical experience, they develop

self-efficacy (Mullen et al., 2015). Limited research to date examined whether CTs'

degree of professional identity is a predictor of their degree of counseling self-efficacy.

Research has supported a correlation between characteristics of professional identity such

as knowledge of a profession, one's personal attitudes of the profession, and engagement

with a professional community with self-efficacy (Brady, 2020; Canrinus et al., 2012).

Therefore, further research on other characteristics of professional identity that may be

predictors of counseling self-efficacy is warranted.

## Significance of the Problem

CTs' degree of counseling self-efficacy can have major implications for their

current and future work with clients. Previous research has indicated that counseling self-

efficacy is positively correlated with client outcomes and factors that may negatively

impact counseling sessions. Low self-efficacy could also disrupt counseling sessions and

lead to poor client outcomes (Flash et al., 2016; McCarthy, 2014). Self-efficacy may

negatively impact one's ability to perform counseling skills effectively, lead to poor self-

perception of one's ability to counsel, increase risk of current and future burnout, and

disrupt professional identity development (Aliyev & Tunc, 2015; Gibson et al., 2010;

Jaafar et al., 2009; Larson & Daniels, 1998; Urbani et al., 2002). Practicum and

internship are a crucial time for the development of CTs' counseling self-efficacy

(Ikonomopoulos et al., 2016; Mullen et al., 2015; Min, 2012; Ooi et al., 2018). Therefore,

the present study seeks to examine constructs which may influence CTs' counseling self-efficacy. It is important for counselor educators to be aware of these constructs to better promote CTs' counseling self-efficacy.

No study found to date has examined how academic entitlement can impact CTs. The lack of research examining the impact of academic entitlement could be problematic as traits of academic entitlement may have important implications when counselor educators work with CTs. There are numerous maladaptive behaviors and traits which are linked to academic entitlement: increased narcissism, general entitlement, workplace entitlement, poor self-esteem, control issues, lack of agreeableness and conscientiousness, poorer grades, not being open to experiences, and emotional instability (Bertl et al., 2019; Bonaccio et al., 2016; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Peirone & Maticka-Tyndale, 2017). Because academic entitlement has been associated with poor self-esteem, and various other maladaptive behaviors/traits, these factors may potentially influence CTs' perception of their ability to complete counseling-related tasks. Although there is limited research, a high degree of academic entitlement may be associated with a lower degree of self-efficacy (Boswell, 2012). This relationship could be furthered explored through examining whether academic entitlement is a predictor of counseling self-efficacy. Examining the construct of counselor professional identity would only further aid in understanding the development of CTs' counseling self-efficacy.

Professional identity is also crucial for the professional development of CTs. Not developing a professional identity has been linked with not understanding one's professional role, lack of confidence of performing professional roles, reduced autonomy,

not engaging with a professional community, disparity in knowledge of the profession, and a negative attitude towards the counseling profession (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014; Woo et al., 2017). With knowledge of the impact that professional identity has on CTs' development, it is important to understand if this construct influences other aspects of their development, such as counseling self-efficacy. Counselor professional identity has been found to be predictive of general forms self-efficacy (Brady, 2020), however the study of how counselor professional identity influences counseling self-efficacy is limited. It is for this reason the present study is needed. Within counselor education, a focus on the tasks which are important for the professional identity of CTs is important. For example, previous research has shown that counselor educators can promote doctoral students' confidence within the counseling profession by emphasizing the tasks necessary for professional identity development (Dollarhide et al., 2013). The present study could provide further information if this association is prevalent among master's level counseling students as well. The present study could therefore provide evidence for counselor educators being able to promote CTs' counseling self-efficacy through developing their students' professional identity.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to investigate if CTs' degree of academic entitlement and/or degree of counselor professional identity predicted their degree of counseling self-efficacy. Previous studies have examined the interactions of academic entitlement with various forms of self-efficacy (e.g., academic or coursework). No research has been found to date on the academic entitlement of CTs and how it could be a predictor of their counseling self-efficacy. Previous research has examined the

association of professional identity and self-efficacy, but no research to date has investigated whether counselor professional identity is a predictor of counseling self-efficacy. Academic entitlement has been found to have a negative interaction with various forms of self-efficacy, due to these constructs being negatively correlated (Boswell, 2012; Frey, 2015; Vallade et al., 2014). Professional identity has found to have a positive interaction with various forms of self-efficacy as there is evidence that possessing a professional identity has been linked to individuals feeling confident in their counseling abilities (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Heled & Davidovitch, 2021; Moss et al., 2014). Due to the impact academic entitlement and professional identity have on various forms of self-efficacy, examining the impact these constructs have on counseling self-efficacy was warranted. The following research will contribute to counselor educators' and supervisors' understanding of how to promote the development of CTs' counseling self-efficacy.

**Summary**

Counseling self-efficacy was an important construct to study as this trait can impact CTs' development and execution of counseling skills (Lent et al., 2009). For this reason, it was important to explore constructs which may be negatively associated with CTs' counseling self-efficacy. Academic entitlement is one construct which has been found to have a negative impact on self-efficacy (Boswell, 2012). Lower degrees of professional identity can also have a negative influence on various forms of self-efficacy (Brady, 2020; Heled & Davidovitch, 2021). In the present study, academic entitlement and counselor professional identity were examined as separate constructs that may predict CTs' counseling self-efficacy. The purpose of the present study was to investigate

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if CTs' degree of academic entitlement and/or degree of counselor professional identity predicted their degree of counseling self-efficacy.

## Research Questions

Does degree of academic entitlement predict degree of counseling self-efficacy among master's level counselor trainees?

Does degree of counselor professional identity predict degree of counseling self-efficacy among master's level counselor trainees?

## Definition of Terms

Counseling

Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals (Kaplan et al., 2014).

Counselor Trainee

Counselor trainee will be operationalized as an individual who is currently enrolled in practicum or internship at a CACREP accredited master's-level counselor education program.

Practicum

A course a counseling student is registered in after successfully completing their required counselor education coursework. Practicum requires a student to engage in supervised direct and indirect counseling services (100 hours; 40 direct hours). The

student engages in weekly group supervision (1 ½ hours) with a faculty member within their counselor education program (CACREP, 2015).

Internship

A course a counseling student is registered in after successfully completing their practicum. Internship requires a student to engage in supervised direct and indirect counseling services (600 hours; 240 direct hours). The student engages in weekly group supervision (1 ½ hours) with a faculty member within their counselor education program (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2015).

Academic Entitlement

Academic entitlement is defined as the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success (Chowning & Campbell, 2009).

Counselor Professional Identity

Counselor professional identity is defined as identifying with the counseling profession through professional knowledge, knowing the philosophy of the profession, demonstrating expertise and a professional role, considering one's attitude towards the profession and self, engaging with the counseling profession, and interacting with other counseling professionals (Woo & Henfield, 2015).

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Counseling Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as one's belief or judgement about their ability to effectively counsel a client (Larson & Daniels, 1998).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

**Theoretical Framework**

One theoretical framework which has been utilized to conceptualize self-efficacy

is Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy has been defined as "beliefs in

one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given

attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). This theory emphasizes that efficacy beliefs play an

important role in task completion. Self-efficacy is theorized to be associated with one's

ability to acquire knowledge regarding a specific task, feeling competent to complete that

task, and then possessing the skills necessary to effectively perform that task. Self-

efficacy is a construct derived from Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997).

To better understand self-efficacy, social cognitive theory should be explained further.

**Social Cognitive Theory**

Social cognitive theory is a backdrop for self-efficacy theory which posits that

psychosocial functioning is multifaceted. There is an interaction between internal and

external factors which influence self-perception and action (Bandura, 1997). Bandura

(2002) discussed how social cognitive theory has an agentic perspective regarding human

development. Agent was defined as something that has an influence on someone's

functioning and circumstances. Social cognitive theory involves three forms of agency

including personal agency, proxy agency, and collective agency. Personal agency is relying on one's own personal influence. Proxy agency was referred to relying on the influence of others. Collective agency was described as the reliance on self and others to obtain desired outcomes. Various influences, known as determinants, aid in the development of competency and influence action steps during task completion in regard to human agency. There are three classes of determinants: behaviors, personal factors (cognition, affective, and biological), and the environment (Bandura, 1986). The theory has been explained as a causal structure where these determinants influence one another bidirectionally; they shape and control one another through two-sided determinism (Bandura, 1999).

Self-efficacy is considered one of the pervasive components of social cognitive theory. Personal efficacy has an essential role in social cognitive theory as it acts upon determinants (Bandura, 1997). Each of the factors which guide motivation and behavior are rooted in one's beliefs in their ability to produce the results one desires. Regardless of the other influential factors, self-efficacy influences one's ability to act and/or persevere when facing difficulties and regulates human functioning (Bandura, 2002). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy influences choice, motivation, acquiring knowledge, and the use of skills. In other words, one's perceived personal self-efficacy will have a greater influence than the determinants. An individual may have a great skillset and a supportive environment to complete a given task. If an individual has poor self-efficacy, resulting in self-doubt, it may result in them poorly utilizing their skills despite their skills and environment. Understanding the roots of self-efficacy provides a foundation for conceptualizing Bandura's self-efficacy theory.

**Self-Efficacy Theory**

According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy theory assumes that psychological processes strengthen and create expectations of one's personal efficacy. Efficacy expectations are therefore emphasized within the theory. These expectations are defined as the belief that one can execute behaviors needed to produce a desired outcome. Efficacy expectations are more influential than outcome expectations. Differentiating between these expectations is important as the theory posits that regardless of one's outcome expectations, their efficacy expectations are what guide and influence their behaviors. Despite efficacy expectations being emphasized as an important determinant which influences behaviors, the theory recognizes these expectations is not the only sole determinant.

Bandura (1977) recognized that expectations alone do not result in a desired performance. Factors such as skillset and incentives also have an influence, however, activities, effort, and perseverance during times of stress may impact performance and are determined by efficacy expectations. Other influences which cause efficacy expectations to vary are dimensions of these expectations: magnitude, generality, and strength. Each of these dimensions are known as the multidimensionality of the belief systems self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Magnitude, also known as level, was referred to how efficacy expectations differ based on the level of difficulty of a given task. Generality was described as efficacy expectations which are contingent upon a wide array of activities or specific domains of completing a task. Strength was explained as the level of self-assurance possessed during a course of action. A weak sense of personal efficacy results in lesser perseverance and a lower likelihood of an activity being performed successfully

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while stronger efficacy beliefs result in greater perseverance and successful outcomes (Bandura, 1977, 1997).

Research on self-efficacy theory has supported the assumption that self-efficacy is an accurate predictor of behavior change, mediating anxiety, and improving performance when completing tasks (Bandura & Adams, 1977). Weinberg et al. (1979) tested the theory and provided additional empirical support for efficacy expectations being a mediator of performance. Some past research challenged the assumptions of self-efficacy theory by making the claim the theory oversimplifies variables which are involved with behavior change and that the influence of outcome expectations is dismissed (Eastman & Marzillier, 1984). Bandura (1997) challenged past researchers claims regarding self-efficacy theory's lack of consideration for variables that may impact behavior change and performance, stating that "self-efficacy beliefs are not simply inert predictors of future performance, as some writers have suggested" (p. 38).

Recently through a meta-analysis, Williams and Rhodes (2016) acknowledged there is evidence for both claims made in past research. Self-efficacy was reported as being a robust predictor of behaviors. It was also suggested that performing behaviors may be a result of other variables, such as motivation, and not just perceived capabilities. Self-efficacy theory suggests that efficacy beliefs inform levels of motivation, but self-efficacy alone is independent of motivation (Bandura, 1986, 1997). The development of self-efficacy, and the influence it has on behavior and thought processes, is conceptualized through the various sources of self-efficacy.

*Sources of Self-Efficacy*

Bandura (1977, 1997) explained that the construction of self-efficacy beliefs comes from four different sources: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states. Each of these four sources of self-efficacy are information utilized to judge future personal capabilities, which in turn impact one's more immediate behaviors. The information gained from these sources is most useful when processed appropriately through reflective thought. Ways in which these sources influence personal efficacy is based on interpretation. For each of these sources of self-efficacy, how individuals select, interpret, and integrate the efficacy information effects whether the information impacts personal efficacy.

**Enactive Mastery Experience.** Bandura (1997) defined mastery experience as gaining direct experience completing a task. Direct experience is when someone is practicing the task in which they are seeking to build their personal efficacy in. When people successfully complete a task, their self-efficacy will increase. The increase in personal efficacy occurs as a result of individuals proving to themselves they have the ability to effectively execute a given course of action. Experiencing success and obstacles while gaining the direct experience can impact efficacy. Success at completing a task reinforces personal efficacy. Encountering and overcoming obstacles is beneficial as individuals learn that success requires continual effort and that it is a process to develop the skills necessary to be effective. Bandura (1997) stated, "difficulties provide opportunities to learn how to turn failure into success by honing one's capabilities to exercise better control over events" (p. 80). Individuals learn that their success and failure to effectively perform tasks are not the only factors contributing to positive outcomes.

Even when the experiences do not result in a desired outcome, individuals learn to accept other external factors outside of themselves that have an influence on task completion. The reason why this source is so important is because it is most influential source of self-efficacy. Enactive mastery experiences provide the clearest evidence that an individual has the ability succeed at a given task (Bandura, 1997).

For the present study, mastery experiences had many implications. Practicing counseling skills with clients, and modeling the skills of others (e.g., supervisor, professors, and peers), has been supported as a way to enhance counselor trainees' (CTs) self-efficacy (Mullen et al., 2015). Of the four sources of self-efficacy, mastery experience has been found to be one of the greatest contributors to counseling self-efficacy (Ooi et al., 2018). Clinical experience aids in the progression of professional identity development as well (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Gaining experience provides an opportunity for CTs to understand how their personal and professional identities intersect. Increasing awareness of how these identities intersect with one another contributes to professional identity development (Gibson et al., 2010). Regarding academic entitlement and mastery experience, academic entitlement is the belief that someone is deserving of successful outcomes in their education; regardless of effort or their own perceived abilities (Miller, 2013). Practicum and internship are stages of CTs' education (CACREP, 2015). Professional experiences may challenge entitled beliefs and increase awareness that successful outcomes require effort on the part of CTs. Although mastery experiences greatly contribute to the development of self-efficacy, observing others as they complete tasks can also be beneficial.

**Vicarious Experience.** Vicarious experience is learning through observation. Individuals can increase personal efficacy beliefs by observing others completing the tasks in which they aim to become competent in (Bandura, 1977). Vicarious experiences offer opportunities to compare one's skills to that of others (Bandura, 1997). As individuals witness others completing tasks successfully, their belief in their ability to complete that task also increases. The increase in personal efficacy occurs as a result of an individual adopting the belief that if others can complete a task, they could be able to do it as well (Bandura & Barab, 1973). The theory also applies to witnessing others perform tasks unsuccessfully. Observing others who are unsuccessfully completing tasks may provide learning opportunities. Individuals may learn what not to do and how to perform tasks differently to achieve successful outcomes. Vicarious experiences are important because in certain situations, absolute measures of success or adequacy are not available. In these circumstances, vicarious experiences provide opportunities for individuals to evaluate their capabilities in comparison to others' attainments. These social comparisons allow for appraisal of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Throughout internship and practicum experiences, CTs are exposed to how counseling skills are performed effectively and ineffectively by peers, professors, or other counseling professionals. This exposure to completing counseling related tasks may resolve anxiety regarding the implementation of skills while gaining the knowledge of how to appropriately perform related skills; resulting in an increase of counseling self-efficacy (Mullen et al., 2015). Although vicarious experiences can be beneficial, some research has shown that there is not a statistically significant relationship between vicarious experiences and counseling self-efficacy (Ooi et al., 2018). Observations also

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can have an impact on one's professional identity development in counseling. Observing others in counseling practice, such as shadowing experiences, provide perspective of what to expect when entering the counseling field. Developing an accurate expectation for what the counseling workforce looks like aids in professional identity development (Moss et al., 2014). No study found to date has provided a link between academic entitlement and vicarious experiences; however, individuals who are academically entitled perceive learning as being solely dependent upon others (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Jeffres et al., 2014). Vicarious experiences are beneficial when an individual can partly rely on the experience of others, but then develop an internalized belief to take responsibility for raising their performance (Bandura, 1982, 1997). Not only does observing others have an influence on individuals' self-efficacy, receiving feedback from others can also enhance personal efficacy beliefs.

      **Verbal Persuasion.** Bandura (1977, 1997) described verbal persuasion as feedback from others which reinforces an individual's belief in their capabilities to perform a given task. When individuals who play a significant role in a person's life express a belief in one's capabilities, this can encourage self-change and enhance efficacy beliefs. In return, the individual may develop self-affirming beliefs, have promoted skill development, and enhanced personal efficacy. If someone is receptive and persuaded by feedback, they are more likely to provide a greater sustained effort when completing a task. This is important as verbal persuasion can offset self-doubts and assist individuals who are dwelling on their personal deficiencies during tasks. Ultimately, verbal persuasion can reinforce (or discourage) an individual's confidence in their capabilities.

Verbal persuasion can be a strong source of self-efficacy for CTs. When CTs'
receive feedback during their training, it can enhance their counseling self-efficacy
(Flasch et al., 2016; McCarthy, 2014). Self-efficacy is increased by CTs receiving
feedback that allows them to conceptualize treatment approaches for clients while feeling
supported by others (Ooi et al., 2018). Receiving feedback can also aid in professional
identity development. External validation from professors, supervisors, peers, and
counseling colleagues is one of the main components of professional identity
development (Dollarhide et al., 2013). Receiving validation from others regarding
counseling skills provides a sense of confidence in their ability to be a counselor.
Counselor trainees rely primarily on external validation to understand the professional
identity of counseling (Gibson et al., 2010). Verbal persuasion may not be a great source
of self-efficacy for individuals who are academically entitled. Individuals who are
academically entitled appear to be less receptive to feedback and are less willing to adjust
their behaviors in response to feedback (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; McLellan &
Jackson, 2017). Therefore, if a CT is academically entitled, they would be reluctant to
verbal persuasion to boost their self-efficacy. If a CT has self-doubt regarding their
counseling skills and are unwilling to be receptive of feedback from others, their self-
doubt could lead to dwelling on their perceived deficiency (Bandura, 1997). In addition
to sources of self-efficacy which rely on others, one source of self-efficacy is based on
internal experiences.

**Physiological and Effective States.** Physiological and effective states, also
referred to as emotional arousal, is when an individual interprets their competency based
on their positive or negative emotional and physiological states during task completion.

The evaluation of these states can also occur after the completion of a task (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1997) discussed how physiological and emotional states alone are not an accurate indicator of one's personal efficacy. How individuals process these states is how they appraise their personal efficacy. People will evaluate themselves positively when they are in a pleasant mood and negatively when they are in an unpleasant mood. Understanding this concept may enhance individuals' ability to accurately assess their emotional and physiological states while completing tasks. When individuals are accomplishing tasks early on in their training, they may feel a sense of anxiety that impacts their perceived competency (Flasch et al., 2016). If individuals recognize this anxiety is due to having a new experience, and not as a descriptor of their capability, this may prevent them from having an inaccurate assessment of their skills. It is important for individuals to appropriately recognize and manage heighted physiological and emotional states. One's physiological and emotional states can impact individuals' judgments regarding their self-efficacy. Inaccurately assessing one's skills based on heightened physiological and emotional states may lead to an inaccurate assessment of their capabilities (Bandura 1977, 1997).

Heightened physiological and effective states are common for CTs when they begin counseling clients. CTs may experience heightened emotional arousal, such as anxiety and the physical effects of it, when they begin providing counseling services. It is important individuals process their anxiety so it does not impact their perceived self-efficacy (Flasch et al., 2016). By managing heighted emotional and affective states, CTs' counseling self-efficacy may be enhanced (Bandura & Adams, 1977; Ooi et al., 2018). When developing a professional identity, CTs will shift from relying on external

validation to self-validation (Gibson et al., 2010). If an individual does not learn how to interpret their heightened physiological and emotional states effectively, these states may be a barrier to their professional identity development. There are important implications when considering the interaction between physiological and emotional arousal and academic entitlement. Individuals who are academically entitled are more likely to demonstrate emotional instability and possess increased negative emotional states in achievement settings (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Bonaccio et al., 2016). Practicum and internship phases of counselor education are important as they are required to achieve one's degree in counseling in CACREP accredited programs (CACREP, 2015). Bandura (1997) emphasized how one's mood can create a biased interpretation of their personal efficacy. This interaction was explored further in the present study by examining if academically entitled attitudes predicted counseling self-efficacy. Additional considerations are the implications self-efficacy has for professional outcomes.

### Self-Efficacy and Professional Outcomes

The impact of self-efficacy on professional outcomes has been well researched. Through a meta-analysis of past research on the association between general self-efficacy and job-related burnout across various professions, Shoji et al. (2015) found that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and burnout. The researchers reported a stronger relationship between these constructs with older workers and those who have been working at their jobs for a long time. Findings from this research are consistent with self-efficacy theory which emphasizes that self-efficacy influences stress levels and persistence while completing tasks (Bandura, 1997). Across professions, individuals who have high degree of perceived self-efficacy are likely to demonstrate responses that are

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socially desirable to employers (Gangloff & Mazilescu, 2017). Self-efficacy has also been supported as influencing job satisfaction, task performance, and turnover rates. Each of these influences could be contribute to burnout. Higher rates of self-efficacy can result in greater satisfaction with a job, increased performance of employees, and decreased rates turnover (Ozyilmaz et al., 2018). There are multiple considerations regarding why there is a connection between self-efficacy and professional outcomes.

Yao et al. (2018) discussed how general self-efficacy is a predictor of one's behaviors, thoughts, emotions, and responses to challenges in a given environment. Over time, there has been plenty of research on why self-efficacy has such an impact on professional outcomes. Self-efficacy has an impact on the personal attributes of a person, which may impact the professional work the individual does. Low self-efficacy influences personal attributes such as mental health concerns, feelings of exhaustion, low self-esteem, poor life satisfaction, lack of personal accomplishment, and a wide range of negative emotions (Azizli et al., 2015; Milam et al., 2019; Schönfeld et al., 2016; Yao et al., 2018). With the vast impact self-efficacy can have on a person according to these research studies, it is evident how important self-efficacy is for positive professional outcomes in a profession. Self-efficacy also has important implications for the counseling profession.

### Counseling Self-Efficacy and Professional Outcomes

Larson and Daniels (1998) described counseling self-efficacy as one's judgements or perceptions about their ability to counsel clients. These researchers discussed how counseling self-efficacy has been an important construct discussed in past counseling literature due to the implications counseling self-efficacy has for those in the counseling

profession; anxiety levels during practice, perseverance in the counseling practice and training, level of effort expended on counseling related tasks, and counseling performance. Recently, research has supported the findings of Larson and Daniels' (1998) review of the literature pertaining to the implications counseling self-efficacy has on professional outcomes. Increased self-efficacy has been associated with ethical practice and better job performance of counselors (Mullen et al., 2016). Ethical practice is essential for counselors to promote the well-being of clients in their practice and to perform their professional responsibilities appropriately (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014). Burnout of counselors has also been associated with degree of counseling self-efficacy; higher degree of self-efficacy may result in lower rates of burnout (Gündüz, 2012; Jacobs, 2020; Yang & Hayes, 2020). In a review of counseling literature on burnout, Yang and Hayes (2020) found that burnout can result in negative professional outcomes such as poor physical and psychological well-being, low job satisfaction, higher turnover rates, ineffective practice, decreased client engagement, and poor client outcomes. Counseling self-efficacy is positively correlated with an increased rate of services provided to clients (Mullen & Lambie, 2016). When provided the option, counselors with high counseling self-efficacy are more likely to offer services to their clients. It is clear that counseling self-efficacy has an impact on licensed counselors' professional outcomes, but there are also significant considerations for the counseling self-efficacy of CTs' and their professional outcomes.

**Counselor Trainees' Counseling Self-Efficacy and Professional Outcomes**

Counselor trainees' counseling self-efficacy is often low when beginning their education, but throughout their counselor preparation programs counseling self-efficacy

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has been found to increase (Flasch et al., 2016; Kozina et al., 2010; Mullen et al., 2015).

Perceived counseling self-efficacy is a personal assessment of one's competence to

counsel a client (Barnes, 2004; Larson & Daniels, 1998). CTs' beliefs about their

counseling abilities can have major implications throughout their counseling programs.

Flasch et al. (2016) discussed how CTs' perceived self-efficacy impacted their perception

of their ability to work with clients and their anxiety levels. The fears reported by CTs

associated with their low counseling self-efficacy were, "feeling ill-prepared to work with

different types of clients, self-focus, competence, client judgement, fear of lack of

direction in a session, fear of lacking skill competence, fear of group counseling, and fear

of not growing as a counselor" (Flasch et al., 2016, p. 7). Counseling self-efficacy has

also been associated with CTs' mindfulness, ability to display empathy, and maintaining

a focus on clients in counseling sessions. Each of these traits are essential for CTs to

perform their professional role effectively during practicum and internship; being

attentive to clients during counseling sessions, demonstrating empathy, and being

nonjudgmental of clients (Greason & Cashwell, 2009; Wei et al., 2015). With multiple

associations counseling self-efficacy has with traits that are necessary for performing

counseling skills, it is understandable why counseling self-efficacy has been shown as a

predictor of CTs' counseling performance (Jaafar et al., 2009). However, other qualities

of CTs such as academic entitlement may also impact their ability to develop

professionally.

### Academic Entitlement

Academic entitlement has been defined as when an individual expects academic

success but does not take personal responsibility for achieving that success (Chowning &

Campbell, 2009). Academic entitlement has been identified as a growing trend in higher education (Crone et al., 2020). Common demographic characteristics of individuals who are academically entitled are nontraditional male students. Race and the number of years spent in college are not considered to have a relationship with academic entitlement (Boswell, 2012; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Crone et al., 2020; Sohr-Preston & Boswell, 2015). Individuals who are academically entitled perceive their education as a product they have paid for; therefore, regardless of their performance, they feel entitled to successful outcomes (Kopp et al., 2011; Sessoms et al., 2016). Chowning and Campbell (2009) identified two characteristics of academic entitlement, externalized responsibility and entitled expectations.

Chowning and Campbell (2009) referred to externalized responsibility as the tendency for an individual to believe the outcome of their education is dependent on others. Those with externalized responsibility will disregard the role of personal responsibility for the outcomes of their education. Entitled expectations was described as expecting others to accommodate their preferences throughout their education. Some examples of entitled expectations are students expecting a professor to curve a grade, having late assignments accepted, and instructing a course in a way the student expects the course to be instructed. Academic entitlement has been associated with traits of viewing oneself as superior to others in academia, lack of personal responsibility, inflexibility, self-serving attitudes and behaviors, and faulty expectations (Jeffres et al., 2014; Knepp, 2016). Research on academic entitlement has further highlighted the vast impact of this trait.

Those who are academically entitled have demonstrated inappropriate academic behaviors including: seeking unnecessary accommodations from instructors, lack of personal responsibility for academic performance, grandiose thinking, negative interactions with instructors, challenging instructors, complaining, violating rules of instructors, negative affect, not appropriately engaging in class discussions, and engaging in unethical behavior such as cheating (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Elias, 2017; Jiang et al., 2017). Not only does academic entitlement negatively impact students, but it may also impede instructors' ability to teach effectively (Barret & Scott, 2014; Jiang et al., 2017). With these behaviors, it is understandable how research has supported that students who are academically entitled have poor academic self-efficacy and may not perform well in their courses (Boswell, 2012; Frey, 2015). It was important to further examine ways in which students' self-efficacy was impacted by academic entitlement.

**Self-Efficacy and Academic Entitlement**

Bandura (1997) claimed that individuals will not try to complete a task if they perceive they have little power to produce a desired outcome. This concept was referred to as human agency. Bandura (2006) discussed four essential properties of human agency including intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Intentionality was defined as generating plans of actions and strategies to complete a task. Forethought was referred to as the directions an individual generates to achieve goals and desired outcomes. Self-reactiveness is being self-regulated and executing the courses of actions needed to complete a task. Lastly, self-reflectiveness has been described as self-awareness. Self-reflectiveness is reflecting on one's functioning, thoughts, and efficacy. Academic entitlement may negatively impact these properties of human agency.

As previously stated, individuals who are academically entitled externalize responsibility for their academic outcomes and possess the belief that their academic success relies on others (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Jeffres et al., 2014). If academically entitled students possess externalized responsibility, they do not perceive they have the ability to obtain their desired results of their education; a key component of perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Knepp (2016) discussed how academically entitled students have been found to lack an internal locus of control and feel there is nothing they can do to impact their performance. With this mindset, individuals would not possess the human agency core properties of intentionality, forethought, and self-reactiveness. Without perceiving that there is anything an individual can do to achieve desired academic outcomes, they may not put forth the effort to generate goals, lack direction, and not take action. Even if an academically entitled individual would place expectations on their academic performance, these expectations most likely would be faulty (Jeffres et al., 2014). Individuals who are academically entitled possess traits of emotional instability and negative affect (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Bonaccio et al., 2016). The emotional instability and predominant negative emotions could negatively impact the core properties of self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness. Based on this research, it is clear that academic entitlement may adversely impact self-efficacy.

Limited research found to date has examined the direct interaction between academic entitlement and self-efficacy. Boswell (2012) found that academic entitlement has an association with self-efficacy beliefs. It was found that academic entitlement is a predictor of students' course self-efficacy and that the two constructs are negatively

correlated. The interaction between self-efficacy and academic entitlement was attributed to externalized responsibility. Since those who are academically entitled do not take personal responsibility for their academic outcomes, the confidence they possess in their abilities to produce positive outcomes is limited. Sohr-Preston and Boswell (2015) examined whether different types of self-efficacy are predictors of academic entitlement. The researchers reported that general self-efficacy and college self-efficacy alone are not significant predictors of academic entitlement. No study found to date has examined the academic entitlement of CTs or the influence academic entitlement has on counseling self-efficacy. However, academic entitlement's adverse impact on various forms of self-efficacy has been researched.

### Critique of Research on Academic Entitlement and Self-Efficacy

Boswell (2012) investigated whether academic entitlement was correlated with college course self-efficacy. There were 313 participants in the study who were undergraduate students from a single university in the United States. The academic entitlement scale (AES; Chowning and Campbell, 2009) was utilized to measure academic entitlement. The Course Self-Efficacy subscale of the College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI; Solberg et al., 1993) was utilized to measure students' course self-efficacy. Using multiple regression analyses, the researcher found a statistically significant correlation between academic entitlement and course self-efficacy. It was found that course self-efficacy was a statistically significant predictor of academic entitlement for students (Boswell, 2012).

One limitation of Boswell's (2012) study was the generalizability of the results to the present study. Participants were undergraduate students from a single university with

a majority (60.4%) of the participants being freshman. The results of the study may not be generalizable to the participants who were in the present study; CTs. Rather than utilizing the entire instrument, Boswell (2012) only utilized one subscale of the CSEI to measure self-efficacy. No support for the usefulness of this subscale independently from the rest of the CSEI was provided. Since Boswell was able to provide support for there being a relationship between academic entitlement and course self-efficacy, further research on whether academic entitlement is correlated with counseling self-efficacy is needed. Boswell examined whether self-efficacy is a predictor of academic entitlement. The present study expanded on Boswell's research by examining if academic entitlement was a predictor of counseling self-efficacy. It was important to examine other research which has explored this relationship further.

Frey (2015) also conducted a research study examining the relationship between academic entitlement and academic self-efficacy. Participants in the study were 607 students from the University of Windsor. The Academic Entitlement Scale (AES; Greenberger et al., 2008) were used to assess the participants' level of academic entitlement. To measure academic self-efficacy, the reduced version of the College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (CASES; Owen & Froman, 1988). Frey (2015) conducted bivariate correlations and found there was a statistically significant negative correlation between academic entitlement and self-efficacy; higher degree of academic entitlement was correlated to lower levels of self-efficacy. The researcher also noted that individuals with higher levels of academic entitlement and lower levels of self-efficacy had a poorer perception of their ability to achieve desired academic outcomes (Boswell, 2012; Frey, 2015).

Limitations of Frey's (2015) research study were participants being from a single university in Canada and the author not reporting specific demographic characteristics of participants; only age, gender, and race were included. The researcher did not include what level of education the students were enrolled in. The generalizability of this study's finding to the present study's participants, CTs from the United States, should be cautioned. In the present study, the researcher added to these findings by specifying the degree of academic entitlement and counseling self-efficacy of CTs. Frey (2015) mentioned their study was useful for providing evidence of the correlation between academic entitlement and self-efficacy. Additional research investigating the relationship between these constructs was needed to further examine if this finding was supported in a sample of CTs. The present study therefore examined whether academic entitlement was a predictor of counseling self-efficacy among CTs from various universities across the United States.

Huang (2017) explored if self-efficacy is a predictor of academic entitlement. There were 304 participants in the study who were undergraduate students from the University of Windsor in Canada. Academic entitlement was measured by the Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ; Kopp et al., 2011). To measure self-efficacy, the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 2013) was utilized. Through a hierarchical multiple regression analysis, Huang (2017) found that self-efficacy was a statistically significant predictor of academic entitlement. Participants who had low self-efficacy had the highest rates of academic entitlement.

Additional evidence was provided by Huang (2017) for the association of the demographic variable of age, self-efficacy, and academic entitlement. These were

important factors to consider in the present study and was the reason why relevant demographic factors were controlled for. The present study was different from the research of Huang as the independent variable was academic entitlement and the dependent variable was counseling self-efficacy. It is important to consider how participants in the present study were counseling graduate students from the United States, while Huang's study primarily included participants who were undergraduate Canadian students. A limitation identified by Huang was that not many students (1.7%) scored higher on the AEQ. Therefore, how academic entitlement corresponded with the other variables in the study came from a place of neutrality. Participants with low self-efficacy did not have high academic entitlement scores, but they did possess a higher degree of academic entitlement than the participants who had a higher degree of self-efficacy. Recent research has supported that academic entitlement is now a growing trend in higher education (Crone et al., 2020). The present study examined if academic entitlement is becoming prevalent among CTs. Past research by Sohr-Preston and Boswell (2012) does not support Huang's finding that academic entitlement is predicted by self-efficacy.

Sohr-Preston and Boswell (2015) examined if self-concept is a predictor of academic entitlement among undergraduate students in psychology classes at a single university in the United States. 401 participants were gathered for this study. The AES (Chowning & Campbell, 2009) was utilized to assess academic entitlement. To measure self-concept, the researchers utilized two assessments of self-efficacy including the general self-efficacy scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) and the college self-efficacy inventory's course self-efficacy subscale (Solberg et al., 1993). Sohr-Preston and Boswell

(2015) applied a bivariate correlation to examine if there is a relationship between self-concept and academic entitlement. The researchers found that self-concept had a moderately acceptable relationship with academic entitlement. Through a multiple linear regression, the researchers found that self-concept was not a statistically significant predictor of academic entitlement. Additional multiple regression models were conducted to see if either of the self-efficacy scales alone were predictors of academic entitlement. The researchers noted neither of the scales were significant predictors of academic entitlement.

A limitation noted by Sohr-Preston and Boswell (2015) was the generalizability of their findings. Participants in the researchers' study were predominantly White, from a single southern university in the United States, and undergraduate students. The present study aimed to address this limitation by attempting to recruit a diverse sample of participants from multiple universities across the United States. Past research has provided evidence there is a statistically significant negative correlation between self-efficacy and academic entitlement. As an independent variable, self-efficacy is not a predictor of the dependent variable of academic entitlement (Boswell, 2012; Sohr-Preston & Boswell, 2015). Sohr-Preston and Boswell (2015) were focused on self-efficacy as a component of self-concept, not self-efficacy alone. In the present study, the researcher examined the concept of counseling self-efficacy specifically. The present study explored this relationship further by examining if academic entitlement as an independent variable was a statistically significant predictor of self-efficacy as a dependent variable. Past research has supported that academic entitlement is a predictor of self-efficacy (Vallade et al., 2014).

Vallade et al. (2014) provided evidence for academic entitlement being a predictor of self-efficacy. 150 undergraduate students from a single mid-Atlantic university in the United States participated in their study. Academic entitlement was measured by the AES (Chowning & Campbell, 2009) and self-efficacy was measured by the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire's (MSLQ) self-efficacy subscale (Pintrich et al., 1991). By using structural equation modeling, the researchers concluded that there was a statistically significant negative correlation between academic entitlement and self-efficacy. It was noted by the researchers that students with traits of academic entitlement, such as the perception of not having to put in hard work to achieve positive academic outcomes, possess low self-efficacy (Vallade et al., 2014).

Vallade et al. (2014) used the expectancy component subscale of the MSLQ to measure participants' self-efficacy. The expectancy component subscale measures both self-efficacy and expectancy for success (Pintrich et al., 1991). Due to the subscale not measuring self-efficacy alone, the results of the study may be influenced by expectancy for success and not necessarily self-efficacy. The present study utilized an instrument which only measured counseling self-efficacy to limit extraneous variables from disrupting the validity of the study. The study conducted by Vallade et al. (2014) included participants who were undergraduate students from a single mid-Atlantic university and most of the participants were Caucasian (90%). The generalizability of Vallade and colleagues' research findings to the present study may be limited due to the lack of a diverse sample in their study.

**Summary of Academic Entitlement Research**

Five research studies examining the interaction between academic entitlement and various forms of self-efficacy were reviewed. One major limitation in each of these studies was that the interaction between academic entitlement and counseling self-efficacy, specifically, was not examined. Another limitation was that most of the research participants were undergraduate students, and not graduate students. Due to these limitations, the generalizability of these findings for the present study was limited. One key finding from the previous studies was there being a negative interaction between academic entitlement and self-efficacy. Higher levels of academic entitlement were associated with lower levels of self-efficacy. Additionally, it was found that higher levels of self-efficacy predicted lower levels of academic entitlement. The present study expanded upon previous research's exploration between academic entitlement and self-efficacy as it examined if academic entitlement was a predictor of counseling self-efficacy.

<p align="center">**Professional Identity**</p>

Professional identity has been described as a context-specific construct (Moss et al., 2014). Context-specific refers to the conceptualization of professional identity related to a specific profession. The present study will therefore be examining counselor professional identity. Woo and Henfield (2015) described counselor professional identity as having a connection with core aspects of the specific profession. They defined this as identifying with the counseling profession through professional knowledge, knowing the philosophy of the profession, demonstrating expertise and a professional role, considering one's attitude towards the profession and self, engaging with the counseling profession,

and interacting with other counseling professionals. To possess a professional identity in counseling, one must label themselves as a professional, integrate personal and professional selves (e.g., personal and professional values and attitudes), be able to carry out the responsibilities required of a counselor, and be involved within their professional community (Gibson et al., 2010; Lile, 2017). Developing a professional identity is a process that occurs over time (Woo et al., 2017). The process of developing a professional identity in counseling has been emphasized in past research.

Counselor training programs and the practice of counseling provide ample opportunities for professional identity development (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014; Woo et al., 2017). Nugent and Jones (2009) discussed how individuals' application of training and the integration of personal characteristics in a professional setting demonstrate professional identity. The opportunity for professional identity development is first presented early in counseling training programs during master's level counselor education (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014; Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Throughout master's level counseling programs students learn how to define counseling, take personal responsibility for professional growth, and develop a systemic identity. Each of these tasks establish a foundation for professional identity development (Gibson et al., 2010). Towards the end of their training, during practicum and internship, CTs have an opportunity to apply the knowledge they gained throughout their training programs.

During this time, CTs learn the expectations of the counseling profession. Gaining clinical experience is important for professional identity development (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Once counselors have completed their education, they will continue to develop

their professional identity. Moss et al. (2014) identified six themes for continual development of counselors' professional identity: adjusting to expectations of the profession, developing confidence in their practice, integrating personal and professional identities, having an experienced guide, continual learning, and continued work with clients. Despite the known ways to develop a professional identity, it has been difficult for the counseling profession to develop a unified definition and understanding of professional identity.

The difficulty inherent in developing a professional counseling identity has been attributed to the multitude of professional roles in the profession, various training approaches utilized by counselor education programs, and the numerous theoretical approaches used in counseling (Mellin et al., 2011). Burns and Cruikshanks (2018) discussed how some counselors will express seeing the value in establishing a professional identity, but do not view the development of professional identity as being extremely important. Research has supported the importance of establishing a professional identity. Having a professional identity is necessary for the growth of the counseling profession, counselors, and CTs (Woo & Henfield, 2015).

Woo and Henfield (2015) discussed how professional identity has been linked with increased knowledge of the counseling profession, understanding one's counseling role, and engagement with the profession. Lacking a professional identity would have adverse effects such as role confusion, being disengaged from professional activities (e.g., scholarship and attending conferences), and not engaging with others in the professional community. Each of the positive attributes of having developed a

professional identity were suspected as being an attribute of time and experience gained in counseling (Woo et al., 2017).

Individuals who have not developed a professional identity may struggle to adjust to the expectations of the profession. This inflexibility has been attributed to misconceptions of the counseling profession or dissatisfaction with tasks beyond counseling clients. The difficulty of adjusting to expectations, inflexibility, and misconceptions have been found to lead to job dissatisfaction (Moss et al., 2014). Professional identity has also been found as being negatively correlated with burnout. The reason for this correlation is because counselors with a professional identity are more likely to be able to mitigate stress associated with their role as a counselor (Maor & Hemi, 2021). Lacking a professional identity has also been linked to individuals not feeling confident in their counseling abilities (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Moss et al., 2014). As counselors enhance their professional identity, and begin to gain confidence in their skills, this may increase their counseling self-efficacy.

**Self-Efficacy and Professional Identity**

There are multiple links between self-efficacy and professional identity. Moss et al. (2014) discussed how individuals new to the counseling profession expressed feeling a lack of confidence in their profession due to doubting their abilities. As they developed their professional identity and became integrated with others in the profession, they felt supported and became familiar with the roles and expectations of the profession. This interaction and gained experienced increased their confidence within the profession. Confidence in completing tasks is a marker of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Although gained confidence can be useful for professional identity and self-efficacy development,

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knowledge can also be useful for development. Knowledge of the counseling profession has been found to enhance counselors' profession identity as they begin to understand the standards of the profession and their professional roles (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014; Woo & Henfield, 2015; Woo et al., 2017). Bandura (1982) discussed how knowledge is necessary for individuals to develop their self-efficacy. Gaining knowledge allows individuals to appropriately assess and fulfill standards, personally and professionally. As individuals enhance their professional identity through increasing their knowledge of the counseling profession, this may also enhance efficacy beliefs. It is also important to consider how the engagement with the counseling profession can influence one's counseling self-efficacy.

Bandura (1998) discussed how personal efficacy is best achieved when there is congruency between one's personal identity and their social system. The reason why personal efficacy is best achieved in these social systems is because self-efficacy operates within sociocultural networks and is ultimately influenced by one's social networks. One of the beginning steps for developing a strong professional identity is awareness of how one's personal and professional identities intersect (Gibson et al., 2010). Professional identity is further developed when the awareness of these identities transitions to integration of personal and professional selves (Moss et al., 2014). This means that CTs and counselors with a strong professional identity will have a greater sense of congruency between their personal and professional identities.

Both personal self-efficacy and professional identity development occurs as a result of congruency between one's personal identity and the system in which they operate (Bandura, 1998; Moss et al., 2014). Therefore, a strong sense of a professional

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identity in counseling may indicate an increased degree of counselor self-efficacy. Through interactions with others in the counseling profession, CTs and counselors may develop their professional identity (Woo et al., 2017; Woo & Henfield, 2015). Since self-efficacy can be influenced by social systems, it could be inferred that developing a professional identity through engaging with others in the counseling profession would positively correlate with counseling self-efficacy (Bandura, 1998; Woo et al., 2017; Woo & Henfield, 2015).

## Critique of Research on Professional Identity and Self-Efficacy

Research has provided evidence for a professional identity in counseling having a relationship with self-efficacy. Brady (2020) examined if possessing a professional identity in counseling is correlated with general self-efficacy and if professional identity is a predictor of self-efficacy. Participants in the study were 315 master's level counselor education students and individuals who just recently graduated from master's level counselor education programs. The Professional Identity Scale in Counseling (PISC; Woo & Henfield, 2015) was utilized to assess professional identity and the new general self-efficacy scale (NGSE; Chen et al., 2001) was utilized to assess self-efficacy. Brady (2020) found there was a statistically significant positive correlation between participants' scores on the PISC and the NGSE. The research utilized a linear regression analysis to further explore this relationship. Two subscales of the PISC were statistically significant predictors of self-efficacy, Knowledge of the Profession and Attitude toward Profession. Through multiple linear regressions, the researcher also found that each of the subscales of the PISC had a statically significant impact on the correlation of PISC and NGSE scores.

Brady (2020) was able to provide evidence for there being a correlation and a predictive relationship between professional identity in counseling and general self-efficacy. The present study built upon these finding by examining if professional identity in counseling was predictive of counseling self-efficacy. One limitation identified by Brady (2020) was that individuals who participated in this study may naturally have higher rates of professional identity; willingness to participate in research has been described as a characteristic of someone valuing professional identity (Woo & Henfield, 2015). It is important to keep this as a consideration in the present study that participants may possess higher scores for professional identity and therefore have a higher degree of counseling self-efficacy, which may negatively impact the generalizability of the findings. Brady (2020) adapted the NGSE to measure self-efficacy pertaining to participants' professional identity and to assess the self-efficacy of graduate students. Chen et al. (2001) noted that further research should be conducted on the NGSE to verify the instrument is suitable for samples/settings outside of which the instrument was normed on, undergraduate students. Additional consideration should be given to the development of professional identity and self-efficacy based on unique demographic characteristics of those in the counseling professional.

Healey and Hays (2012) examined if identified sex of counseling professionals, counselor educators, and counselor trainees predicted their degree of professional identity. 489 individuals participated in this study with most of the participants being master's level counseling students (60%). The researchers utilized two scales to measure professional identity development, the Professional Identity and Engagement Scale (PIES; Puglia, 2008) and the Professional Identity and Values Scale – Revised (PIVS-R;

Healey et al., 2010). Through a descriptive discriminant analysis, Healey and Hays (2012) found through a canonical correlation that male participants possessed a statically significantly higher degree of professional identity development. The researchers noted that due to these results, there may be contributing factors outside of participants' identified sex and scores on the PIES and PIVS-R which may contribute to their professional identity development. One suggestion proposed by Healey and Hays was that self-efficacy may be a contributor to how participants rated their professional identity. It was assumed that men may rate themselves higher in terms of their professional identity development due to possessing a higher degree of self-efficacy.

There were limitations to Healey and Hays' (2012) study. First, the assumption that male participants' higher degree of professional identity development is related to their perceived higher degree of self-efficacy is not supported. No instruments were utilized to assess participants' counseling self-efficacy. The present study explored this assumption further by utilizing valid measures of professional identity and self-efficacy to explore if counselors' degree of professional identity was a predictor of counseling self-efficacy. Healy and Hays (2012) assumed that males' higher levels of professional identity were related to higher perceived self-efficacy, but previous research has found that gender is not a predictor of perceived self-efficacy (Watson, 2012). Another limitation of Healey and Hays' (2012) study was the demographic makeup of participants in the study; most of the participants were female (80%) and not all of the participants were counselor trainees. The present study aimed to have a diverse sample and only examined the professional identity and self-efficacy of CTs. Additional contributors (e.g.,

relevant demographic variables) to the development of counseling students' professional identity, outside of sex, were considered in the present study.

Gibson et al. (2010) developed a theory of tasks which can aid in the development of the professional identity for master's level counseling students. There were 43 master level counseling students who participated in this study. Through a qualitative research study, utilizing grounded theory methodology, Gibson and colleagues noted how counseling students develop their professional identity was different based on the stage of the program they were in. Their findings indicated that gaining clinical experience was useful for professional identity development. Participants discussed how providing counseling services provided opportunities to apply knowledge gained through coursework and to integrate personal and professional values. The application of knowledge and integration of values appeared to enhance the confidence of participants' ability to counsel clients, creating a link between professional identity development and confidence. Enhanced confidence as being a trait to professional identity development has also been supported in literature (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). These findings provide evidence that an increased counselor professional identity would indicate increased counseling self-efficacy.

Gibson et al. (2010) identified one limitation of their study being that participants were only from two universities across the United States. Therefore, the application of their findings may not be generalizable to the entire population of master's level counseling students. Another limitation is that the researchers are under the assumption that gained clinical experience was useful for professional identity per the report of their participants. The present built upon these findings through quantitative analysis and

specifically assessing CTs' level of professional identity. Although clinical experience was found to be a contributor to participants' professional identity development and confidence, the researchers did not specifically assess self-efficacy. Although gaining clinical experience is a common contributor to the development of counseling students' professional identity (Gibson et al., 2010; Prosek & Hurt, 2014) and counseling self-efficacy (Mullen et al., 2015) additional research was needed to examine the association of these constructs.

Heled and Davidovitch (2021) conducted a research study to define and measure professional identity in the school counseling profession. The researchers sought to understand how a group professional identity influenced the personal professional identity of school counselors. 174 school counselors who provide counseling services in Israel participated in this study. The researchers reported there were no specific measures of their two constructs and combined two adapted measures of professional identity to create a new measure of school counselors' professional identity: Teachers' Professional Identity Scale (Fisherman & Weiss, 2011) and the Professional Identity Scale in Counseling (PISC; Woo and Henfield, 2015). Heled and Davidovitch (2021) utilized principal factor analysis to identify a new factor to be included in their adapted scale, professional efficacy. Utilizing a multiple linear regression, the researchers found that professional identity and professional efficacy had a statistically significant positive correlation. Professional efficacy was found to be a statistically significant predictor of professional identity. As supported by past research, when an individual has a strong sense of a professional identity, they are likely to possess a higher degree of self-efficacy (Brady, 2020; Heled & Davidovitch, 2021).

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One limitation of Heled and Davidovitch's (2021) research was the lack of research validating the instrument they created for their study. Despite utilizing two validated measures of professional identity, there is no research found to date validating the use of their two combined instruments as one instrument to measure professional identity. Another limitation of the study was that there was not a diverse group of participants; only eight of the 174 participants were males. The study was conducted with school counselors from Israel. With the aforementioned characteristics of the study, the generalizability of these findings to CTs in the United States should be cautioned and is a reason why the present study was needed. Heled and Davidovitch (2021) found that professional efficacy, not self-efficacy, is a predictor of professional identity. The present study examined the interaction of professional identity and self-efficacy to understand if counseling self-efficacy was predicted by counselor professional identity.

In a qualitative research study with nine counselors, Alves and Gazzola (2011) utilized semi-structured interviews to understand how counselors defined their professional roles and to identify perceived influences on their professional identity. One theme identified was the participants defining their professional identity in terms of their role. A characteristic of this theme was the perception of their abilities to provide counseling services, specifically possessing self-efficacy, being a component of their professional identity. Participants with a professional identity believed their identity was associated with confidence in their ability to provide counseling services. Some participants expressed having a sense of counseling self-efficacy but did not feel their professional role had been mastered. These findings would indicate that for some participants, professional identity and self-efficacy are interrelated constructs, but for

other participants these constructs were not related. In one interview, it was noted that a participant perceived their confidence in their identity and counseling practice were both influenced by gaining experience by providing counseling services. Clinical experience as an influence on the development of a professional identity and self-efficacy in counseling are consistent themes throughout research (Gibson et al., 2010; Mullen et al., 2015; Prosek & Hurt, 2014).

Alves and Gazzola's (2011) study was conducted with participants who are licensed professional counselors in Canada. The generalizability of these findings to counselors in the United States may be limited. The process of developing a professional identity varies between counseling students and counselors (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014). For the present study, participants were CTs, and not licensed counselors. Alves and Gazzola (2011) only had nine participants in their research study and did not reach saturation. Having a larger sample of participants may assist with the generalizability of these results. The study did not specifically aim to explore the relationship between professional identity and self-efficacy, but their findings indicated an association between the constructs. Due to there being an association between the two constructs, further research was needed to explore this interaction.

**Summary of Professional Identity Research**

There were five research studies critiqued in the previous section. One limitation that was repeated was pertaining to instrumentation. Instruments were either modified, or combined with other instruments, without literature supporting the adaptation of these instruments. Another limitation was with the generalizability of the findings of the studies. Some studies lacked diverse samples or were conducted with participants that

were not from the United States. Various forms of self-efficacy, and not counseling self-efficacy specifically, was the construct reviewed in some of the studies. The present aimed to have a diverse sample of CTs' from the United States and examined counseling self-efficacy. A common finding in the reviewed studies was higher levels of professional identity resulted in higher levels of self-efficacy. Another finding was that education and clinical experience resulted in higher levels of professional identity. This finding supports why the present study inquired about the number of counseling-related courses that were completed by participants and the number of conferences and/or workshops they have attended.

## Summary of Critique of Research

Past research has provided evidence for academic entitlement and self-efficacy being constructs which influence one another. It has been found that academic entitlement and various forms of self-efficacy are negatively correlated (Boswell, 2012; Frey, 2015; Vallade et al., 2014). No study found to date has examined the relationship between academic entitlement and counseling self-efficacy specifically, which is an area that needed to be explored further. The present study built upon past research by examining the interaction between academic entitlement and counseling self-efficacy. Research has examined whether self-efficacy is a predictor of academic entitlement (Boswell, 2012; Huang, 2017; Sohr-Preston & Boswell, 2015). In two studies, self-efficacy was a predictor of academic entitlement (Boswell, 2012; Huang, 2017). In one study, self-efficacy was found not to be a predictor of academic entitlement (Sohr-Preston & Boswell, 2015). No study found to date has examined whether academic entitlement is a predictor of counseling self-efficacy. Not only is the research on

academic entitlement and counseling self-efficacy lacking, but much of the research on these two constructs has been conducted with a sample that are not master's level counseling students.

No study found to date has examined the academic entitlement of master's level counseling students. Past research has predominantly examined the interaction of academic entitlement and a specific form of self-efficacy (e.g., course self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, general self-efficacy, etc.) with undergraduate students (Boswell, 2012; Huang, 2017; Sohr-Preston & Boswell, 2015; Vallade et al., 2014). However, based on the findings of the critiqued studies, it is clear academic entitlement has an adverse impact on self-efficacy. The present study was needed to broaden the generalizability of past research's findings to examine if academic entitlement was a predictor of the counseling self-efficacy of CTs.

Regarding professional identity in counseling and self-efficacy, research has supported there is a positive correlation between these constructs across the counseling profession (Brady, 2020; Heled & Davidovitch, 2021). It has also been supported that professional identity in counseling is a predictor of counselor trainees' general self-efficacy (Brady, 2020). The aforementioned studies did not utilize specific measures of counseling self-efficacy. No research study found to date has specifically examined the interaction between counselor professional identity and counseling self-efficacy of counselor trainees. The present study built upon past research's findings of the relationship between professional identity and self-efficacy, by including counseling self-efficacy as a construct of focus.

There is also past research that has supported the association between professional identity in counseling and self-efficacy. Past researchers have assumed that professional identity contributes to the development of self-efficacy within the counseling profession (Alves & Gazzola, 2011; Gibson et al., 2010; Healey & Hays, 2012; Heled & Davidovitch, 2021). No studies found to date have specifically tested these assumptions and is the reason why the present study was needed. Some past research has made these assumptions within the counseling profession, but not with CTs specifically (Alves & Gazzola, 2011; Healey & Hays, 2012; Heled & Davidovitch, 2021). The present study added to the research as it examined if counselor professional identity is a predictor of counseling self-efficacy among CTs.

### Rationale for the Study

Research has provided support for the impact the constructs counseling self-efficacy, academic entitlement, and counselor professional identity can have on individuals. Feeling prepared to counsel clients, perception of readiness to provide counseling, counselor performance, client outcomes, burnout, and professional identity development are all impacted by counseling self-efficacy (Aliyev & Tunc, 2015; Flasch et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2010; Jaafar et al., 2009; Larson & Daniels, 1998; McCarthy, 2014; Urbani et al., 2002). Academic entitlement influences students' perceptions of self, academic performance, additional forms of entitlement, emotional stability, level of agreeableness and conscientiousness, perception of self-efficacy, and an array of other maladaptive traits (Bertl et al., 2019; Bonaccio et al., 2016; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Peirone & Maticka-Tyndale, 2017). Professional identity is important for CTs' understanding and completing tasks required in their professional role, autonomy,

professional community engagement, knowledge of the profession, attitude towards the counseling profession, and self-efficacy (Brady, 2020; Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014; Woo et al., 2017). With the vast impact these constructs have, it is important that each of them was examined further.

No study found to date has examined the interaction between the constructs of counseling self-efficacy, professional identity, and academic entitlement collectively. There has also not been a study found to date which has examined the academic entitlement of counselor trainees. Separate studies have found that professional identity (Brady, 2020) and academic entitlement are predictors of various forms of self-efficacy (Boswell, 2012; Vallade et al., 2014). The present study examined if academic entitlement and/or professional identity were predictors of counseling self-efficacy. Since there is evidence of high academic entitlement and low professional identity having an adverse impact on self-efficacy, the present study is needed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY


       The purpose of the present study was to investigate if counselor trainees' (CTs) degree of academic entitlement and/or degree of counselor professional identity predicted their degree of counseling self-efficacy. The present research utilized three scales to assess the constructs of interest: Academic Entitlement Scale (AES; Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations combined total subscale score), Professional Identity Scale in Counseling – Short Version (PISC-S; Professional Knowledge, Attitude toward Profession, and Engagement in Counseling Profession combined total subscale score), and the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES). Throughout the literature, the constructs of professional identity and counseling self-efficacy of CTs have been investigated separately. There is limited research on the interaction of these constructs among CTs and no research found to date has investigated CTs' degree of academic entitlement. The aim of the present study was to understand additional constructs which may contribute to the development, or hindrance, of CTs' counseling self-efficacy. This chapter reviewed the present study's purpose, research questions and hypotheses, variables, and research design.

## Research Questions

Does degree of academic entitlement predict degree of counseling self-efficacy among master's level counselor trainees?

Does degree of counselor professional identity predict degree of counseling self-efficacy among master's level counselor trainees?

## Null and Directional Hypotheses

Null hypothesis 1: Degree of academic entitlement (as measured by the Academic Entitlement Scale [AES]) does not statistically significantly predict degree of counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale [CSES]) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Directional hypothesis 1: Higher academic entitlement (as measured by the AES) statistically significantly predicts lower counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES total score) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Null hypothesis 1a: Degree of externalized responsibility (as measured by the AES Externalized Responsibility subscale) does not statistically significantly predict degree of counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Directional hypothesis 1a: Higher externalized responsibility (as measured by the AES Externalized Responsibility subscale) statistically significantly predicts

lower counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Null hypothesis 1b: Degree of entitled expectations (as measured by the AES Entitled Expectations subscale) does not statistically significantly predict degree of counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES) among master's level counselor trainees enrolled in practicum or internship, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Directional hypothesis 1b: Higher entitled expectations (as measured by the AES Entitled Expectations subscale) statistically significantly predicts lower counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES) among master's level counselor trainees enrolled in practicum or internship, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Null hypothesis 2: Degree of counselor professional identity (as measured by the Professional Identity Scale in Counseling – Short Version [PISC-S]) does not statistically significantly predict degree of counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale [CSES]) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Directional hypothesis 2: Higher degree of counselor professional identity (as measured by the PISC-S) statistically significantly predicts lower counseling self-efficacy (as

measured by the CSES total score) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Null hypothesis 2a: Degree of professional knowledge (as measured by the PISC-S Professional Knowledge subscale) does not statistically significantly predict degree of counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Directional hypothesis 2b: Decreased professional knowledge (as measured by the PISC-S Professional Knowledge subscale) statistically significantly predicts lower counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Null hypothesis 2c: Degree of attitude toward profession (as measured by the PISC-S Attitude toward Profession subscale) does not statistically significantly predict degree of counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Directional hypothesis 2c: Decreased attitude toward profession (as measured by the PISC-S Attitude toward Profession subscale) statistically significantly predicts lower counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Null hypothesis 2d: Degree of engagement in profession (as measured by the PISC-S Engagement in Counseling Profession subscale) does not statistically significantly predict degree of counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Directional hypothesis 2d: Decreased engagement in profession (as measured by the PISC-S Engagement in Counseling Profession subscale) statistically significantly predicts lower counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES) among master's level counselor trainees, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

## Independent and Dependent Variables

### Independent Variables

The present study investigated five independent variables (IVs) measuring two separate constructs. Academic entitlement was the first construct of interest and accounted for two continuous IVs, the two subscales of the AES (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). The two subscales of the AES are Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations. Externalized Responsibility was described as when an individual possesses the belief that the outcome of their education and the process of learning is solely dependent upon others. Entitled Expectations refers to a belief that professors should accommodate students' needs and preferences in the classroom setting and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly (Chowning & Campbell, 2009).

Professional identity was the second construct of study and accounted for three IVs. The Professional Identity Scale in Counseling – Short Version (PISC-S; Woo et al., 2018) was utilized to measure professional identity. Three continuous IVs were measured by three PISC-S subscales: Professional Knowledge, Attitude toward Profession, and Engagement in Counseling Profession. Professional knowledge has been described as possessing and understanding of the history of counseling, organizations/associations of the profession, publications, and knowing the philosophy of the profession. Attitude toward Profession involves the pride an individual has for the profession of counseling. Engagement in Counseling Profession is the level of professional engagement with the counseling profession (Woo et al., 2018).

**Dependent Variable**

The construct of counseling self-efficacy was measured as one continuous dependent variable (DV). Counseling self-efficacy was measured by the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES; Melchert et al., 1996). Melchert and colleagues described counseling self-efficacy as an individual possessing self-confidence and feeling competent to perform counseling duties.

**Demographic Variables**

Several demographic variables were investigated to determine whether they had a relationship with the DV and needed to be controlled for during the multiple regression analysis. The demographic variables investigated included (a) number of counseling-related courses completed and (b) number of professional counseling-related conferences and workshops attended.

In a study examining master's level counseling students' counseling self-efficacy, Mullen et al. (2015) found that the amount of time students spent in training within preparation programs (e.g., total credits competed) and/or engaged in previous work related to counseling were statistically significant predictors of counseling self-efficacy. This finding by Mullen and colleagues has been supported by previous literature (e.g., Barbee et al., 2003; Tang et al., 2004). Therefore, the present study investigated whether number of courses completed and/or additional training (e.g., attending counseling conferences or workshops) had a relationship with counseling self-efficacy. Despite prerequisite coursework being completed before enrollment in practicum or internship, students may have taken additional coursework throughout their time in programs. Attendance at counseling conferences or workshops was considered additional time spent in training. Investigating these relevant variables was important for the present study's data analysis to determine if they were control variables.

## Method

### Participants and Sample Size

Participants in the present study were a convenience sample of CTs from the United States. The inclusion criteria for participants was they must be enrolled in practicum or internship at a CACREP accredited master's level counselor education program during data collection. By only including participants who were in practicum or internship at a CACREP accredited university, the possibility of there being significant differences between participants' various degrees of counseling self-efficacy based on education was lessened. In addition, counseling students' self-efficacy increases throughout their counselor preparation programs (Flasch et al., 2016; Kozina et al., 2010;

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Mullen et al., 2015) and is directly linked to counseling-related tasks (e.g., training experiences versus solely didactic classes). Mullen et al. (2015) found the completion of prerequisite coursework, prior to practicum or internship, has the greatest impact on trainees' self-efficacy. The influence of completing prerequisite coursework on students' self-efficacy development was even greater than clinical experience. For this reason, only students who had completed the necessary prerequisite coursework to be enrolled in practicum or internship were participants in the present study.

To calculate the minimum number of participants needed for the present study, a power analysis was conducted for a multiple regression analysis with five IVs, an alpha level of $p < .05$, a power of at least .80, and an anticipated medium effect size of 0.15 (Cohen, 1992). Results showed a minimum of 91 participants were needed for the present study. A total of 166 counseling students began the survey for the present study. Of the 166 participants, a final sample of 97 participants completed all survey questions and were included in the data analysis.

**Sample Descriptive Statistics**

A summary of participant demographic characteristics ($N = 97$) is reviewed below. Regarding program type, a majority of participants reported being enrolled in a clinical mental health counseling program (83.5%). Other programs reported included school counseling (13.4%) and other (3.1%). In terms of gender, most of the participants (83.5%) self-identified as a woman. Other genders self-identified by participants included man (12.4%), non-binary (2.1%), transgender man (1.0%), and other (1.0%). Regarding self-identified race/ethnicity, a majority of participants reported being Caucasian/European American (73.2%), while other races/ethnicities reported included

Hispanic/Latin American (9.3%), African/African American (8.2%),

Multiracial/Multiethnic (5.2%), Other (2.1%), Asian/Asian American (1.0%), and Middle

Eastern/Arabic American (1.0%). The mean age reported by participants was 33.28 years

old; participants ranged in age from 21 to 65 years old. Table 1 presents a summary of the

sample population's demographic characteristics included in the present study.

Table 1

Frequency Distributions of Participants' Demographic Information

| Variable | *n* | % |
|---|---|---|
| Program Type | | |
|    Clinical Mental Health Counseling | 81 | 83.5% |
|    School Counseling | 13 | 13.4% |
|    Other | 3 | 3.1% |
| Gender Identity | | |
|    Woman | 81 | 83.5% |
|    Man | 12 | 12.4% |
|    Nonbinary | 2 | 2.1% |
|    Transgender man | 1 | 1.0% |
|    Other | 1 | 1.0% |
| Race | | |
|    Caucasian/European American | 71 | 73.2% |
|    Hispanic/Latin American | 9 | 9.3% |
|    African/African American | 8 | 8.2% |
|    Multiracial/Multiethnic | 5 | 5.2% |
|    Other | 2 | 2.3% |
|    Asian/Asian American | 1 | 1.0% |
|    Middle Eastern/Arabic American | 1 | 1.0% |

Additional demographic characteristics gathered from participants included total

master's level courses completed and the number of additional trainings that were

attended by participants throughout their master's programs. For total courses completed

in school, the average amount of completed courses was 15.48. Participants also reported

they attended an average of 3.19 additional trainings throughout their master's programs.

In Table 2, a summary of these additional demographic characteristics is provided.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Sample Demographics

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Courses Completed ($n = 97$) | 15.48 | 4.60 | 3 | 25 |
| Additional Trainings ($n = 95$) | 3.19 | 4.12 | 0 | 28 |

**Procedures**

Before beginning the present study, gaining approval from the University of

Akron's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study was needed. Once

approval was granted (Appendix F), the investigator gathered the contact information of

CACREP accredited master's level counselor education programs liaisons in the United

States from the CACREP website directory to recruit participants. Program liaisons were

emailed an initial invitation, and two reminder emails, regarding the present study. The

investigator requested the study invitation and reminders to be forwarded to CTs who

might have been interested in participating in the present study. A total of 417 programs

were sent an invitation to forward the research participation request to their students. The

invitation and reminder emails contained pertinent information regarding the present

study: IRB approval, an electronic link to the survey, benefits of participating in the

study, and contact information for the investigator, faculty advisor, and the University of

Akron's IRB.

Once the CACREP program liaisons forwarded the emails to CTs who may have been interested in participating in the present study, participants had the opportunity to click on a Qualtrics link embedded within the email to access the study. After individuals clicked on the link, they were presented with the informed consent script (Appendix A) to participate in the study. If an individual consented to participate, they had access to complete the survey. Upon successful completion of the survey, participants were presented with the opportunity to be entered into a raffle for a $50 Amazon gift card. If participants wanted to be entered into the raffle for the gift card, they had the option to provide their email at the end of the survey. No identifying information was gathered from the participants as they completed the demographic questionnaire and various self-report measures. Data collection took place from March 2022 until April 2022. After data collection was completed, the data was analyzed.

## Research Design and Data Analysis

There are past studies on counseling self-efficacy and professional identity, but research on the interaction between these two constructs across counseling literature is limited. Academic entitlement is a newer construct with limited research within the counseling field. To date, no study has been found examining the degree of CTs' academic entitlement. With research supporting a relationship among the constructs of academic entitlement, professional identity, and different forms of self-efficacy across various professions, the present study sought to provide an understanding of how these constructs interact among CTs. Therefore, a quantitative research design was utilized in the present study.

A quantitative research design can be useful for examining if there are statically significant relationships between variables. These relationships can be explored further by examining whether or not a variable is predicted by other variables. The present study specifically utilized a non-experimental correlational research design. Utilizing a non-experimental correlational research design, the characteristics of a single group can be examined (Heppner et al., 2016). In the present study, this was the research design that was used to determine whether academic entitlement and/or counselor professional identity were predictive of counseling self-efficacy among CTs.

The present study incorporated a cross sectional research design. A cross sectional research design means that data was collected from a group of individuals during a specific time period (Heppner et al., 2016). The specific group being examined were CTs. The clinical phase of the counselor education program, that is practicum or internship, was the specific training period participants were in during the time of data collection. There were no variables manipulated within this study.

Descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation, and range) were reported for the research variables and demographic characteristics of participants. After descriptive statistics were reported for the five independent variables and the one dependent variable within the present study, descriptive statistics for participants' demographic characteristics were reported for age, gender identity, race, number of counseling courses completed, and how many additional conferences and/or workshops participants have attended. After descriptive statistics were reported, and potential demographic covariates were investigated (i.e., number of courses completed and how many counseling

conferences and workshops participants have attended), null hypotheses were tested

through inferential statistics (Salkind & Frey, 2020).

One hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine if any of

the five continuous IVs within the present study statistically significantly predicted one

continuous DV, controlling for relevant demographic variables. Specifically, a

hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted with two subscales from the AES

and three subscales from the PISC-S, and the DV counseling self-efficacy, as measured

by the CSES. Conducting a hierarchical multiple regression analysis is effective for

examining if two or more continuous IVs are statistically significant predictors of one

continuous DV using more than one step in the analysis (Salkind & Frey, 2020).

Before beginning the main omnibus hierarchical regression analysis, prerequisite

assumptions were tested. In addition to screening for outliers, multivariate normality,

multicollinearity, linearity, and homoscedasticity were examined to verify that multiple

regression assumptions were met (Stevens, 2009). Potential outliers within the data set

were scrutinized using scatterplots and standard deviations of raw data. To verify

multivariate normality, the Kolmogorov-Sminrov test was used. To confirm CSES scores

were normally distributed, there was a non-significant result of the Kolmogorov-Sminrov

test examined (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017). Multicollinearity was tested by examining the

variance inflation factors (VIF) and tolerance among predictor variables. According to

Petrocelli (2003), multicollinearity adversely impacts the interpretation of results.

Stevens (2009) described multicollinearity as the phenomenon where there are high

intercorrelations between predictor variables. When this occurs, there can be a

confounding effect on the predictors making it difficult to determine the importance of a

predictor variable. The VIF should yield a value less than 10 to verify there are no statistically significant relationships among the IVs, and tolerance levels should be greater than .25, as an acceptable indicator of how much beta coefficients are affected by the presence of other predictor variables in a model.

Linearity was examined through a normality plot which compared plots of each of the IVs against the DV. Verifying that the scatterplot possessed an elliptical shape represents one method of determining linearity and normality. Homoscedasticity was verified through analysis of a residual plot. Values being spread out in the residual plot, with no distinct pattern, can support homoscedasticity (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017). Bivariate correlations were also reviewed between each of the IVs and among the IVs and DV to examine if either of these variables were highly correlated. After all prerequisite assumptions were verified, Pearson correlations were conducted.

Prior to conducting the main hierarchical multiple regression analysis, Pearson correlations were conducted between CSES scores and the following demographic variables: (a) number of counseling-related courses completed and (b) number of counseling-related conferences and workshops attended. Pearson correlations were conducted to examine if there was a statistically significant correlation between the CSES score and the demographic variables of interest because these characteristics could impact outcomes of the primary purpose of the study. Statistically significant correlations would indicate the demographic variables need to be considered as covariates, which would need to be controlled for during the hierarchical regression analysis due to their potentially confounding effects.

After determining the status of potential covariates, the main omnibus hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. The first block of the analysis contained the covariate total credits completed in the counseling program. The second block included the five independent variables: two subscales of the AES and three subscales of the PISC-S. To test the research questions and statistical hypotheses, counseling self-efficacy (as measured by the CSES) was the dependent variable. The predictor variables included academic entitlement (as measured by two subscales of the AES) and counselor professional identity (as measured by three subscales of the PISC-S). Control variables included any demographic variables that were found to have a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable (e.g., number of counseling related courses completed and/or counseling related conferences and workshops attended). In order to determine statistical significance for the data analysis, an alpha level of $p < .05$ was utilized.

## Instruments

After agreeing to the informed consent, participants completed a demographic questionnaire and three self-report measures through the survey software Qualtrics. The three self-report measures assessed participants' degree of academic entitlement, counselor professional identity, and counseling self-efficacy.

### Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix B)

The demographic questionnaire was compiled of questions to collect demographic information from participants in the present study. The following demographic information was collected: whether participants were enrolled at a CACREP-accredited institution, if they were currently enrolled in a counseling master's program practicum or

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internship, the type of program they were enrolled in, age, gender identity, race, number of counseling-related courses completed, and number of counseling-related conferences and workshops attended.

**Academic Entitlement Scale (Appendix C)**

Chowning and Campbell (2009) developed the Academic Entitlement Scale (AES) to measure individuals' tendency to expect academic success without taking personality responsibility the achievement of that success. The AES consists of 15 items and has a two-factor structure with two subscales measuring Externalized Responsibility (10 items) and Entitled Expectations (five items). An example of an externalized responsibility question includes "I believe that the university does not provide me with the resources I need to succeed in college." An example of an entitled expectation question includes "My professors should reconsider my grade if I am close to the grade I want." Each of these two subscales were included for the purpose of this study. Items are rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). Higher scores on the AES subscales indicate higher degree of academic entitlement.

Chowning and Campbell (2009) conducted four studies examining the AES. The first two studies examined if the AES subscales are a valid measure of academic entitlement. Studies three and four explored the predictive validity of the measure. For the internal consistency of the AES, Externalized Responsibility subscale's item-total correlation ranged from .40 to .58 and the Entitled Expectations subscale ranged from .27 to .51. To measure reliability, Cronbach's coefficient alphas were computed in the first two studies with varying sample sizes of participants ($N = 453$ and $N = 911$). The first study focused on scale development and the second study was a replication of the first

study with a larger sample size. In both studies, Chowning and Campbell found internal consistency to be high for Externalized Responsibility ($\alpha$ =.81 and $\alpha$ =.83) and moderately acceptable for Entitled Expectations ($\alpha$ =.62 and $\alpha$ =.69). The subscales were correlated in both studies ($r$ = .21 and $r$ = .25; $p$ < .001), but Chowning and Campbell considered these subscales to be distinct factors and recommended the subscale scores should not be summed together.

In the third study conducted by Chowning and Campbell (2009), the AES was found to possess predictive ability. AES scores predicted participants' judgements of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors of students in various academic settings. Participants ($N$ = 386) were to read vignettes of academic situations where characters/students engaged in appropriate or inappropriate behaviors. After reading the vignettes, participants were to rate the likelihood they would respond in a similar manner as the character in the vignette. Through multiple regression analyses, it was found that Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations were statistically significant predictors ($p$ < .001) of participants' attitudes and behaviors. Participants with higher scores of Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations were more likely to rate themselves as likely to engage in inappropriate behaviors.

The fourth study conducted by Chowning and Campbell (2009) explored if AES scores were a predictor of individuals' perceptions of experimenters after receiving various forms of feedback. Participants ($N$ = 123) were instructed to complete academic tasks which included essay questions and the AES. Upon completion of the academic tasks, some participants received fictitious negative feedback. The negative feedback included informing the participants they scored in the 33rd percentile and written

feedback (e.g., "unclear", "eh", "more…"). After receiving the feedback, participants then rated the experimenter who provided feedback. It was found that higher Externalized Responsibility subscale scores were a statistically significant predictor ($p < .003$) of participants rating the experimenter lower than participants with lower scores on the subscale. These findings indicate the AES possesses predictive validity.

**Professional Identity Scale in Counseling – Short Form (Appendix D)**

The Professional Identity Scale in Counseling – Short Form (PISC-S; Woo et al., 2018) is a 16-item measure of counselor professional identity. The 16-items are rated on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from "not at all in agreement" (1) to "totally in agreement" (6). The PISC-S was developed with a more stringent analysis and resulted in a shorter version of the original Professional Identity Scale in Counseling (PISC; Woo & Henfield, 2015). Undergoing a more stringent analysis is an advantage of using the PISC-S over the original PISC. Woo et al. (2018) conducted an exploratory factor analysis with archival data that Woo and Henfield (2015) collected. Participants ($N = 385$) were counseling professionals with varying positions and roles: students (master's and doctoral level), educators, and counselors. Woo et al. (2018) measured sampling adequacy with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity to see if it was appropriate to conduct a principal factor analysis. Principal factor analysis was appropriate as the KMO = .87 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Item-total correlation was inspected prior to principal factor analysis and reduced the 54-item PISC to 34 items. Eigenvalues of the 34 items were compared and principal factor analysis reduced the 34 items 16 items due to the items not meeting a minimum loading magnitude of .60. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed a four-factor model which

accounted for 62% of the variance. High internal consistency reliabilities were calculated for the four subscales. The four subscales, and their internal consistency reliabilities, were Professional Knowledge (.85), Professional Competency (.72), Attitude toward Profession (.70), and Engagement in Counseling Profession (.75).

For the purpose of this study, only three of the four subscales were used to measure professional identity: Professional Knowledge (e.g., "I am able to distinguish the counseling philosophy from the philosophy of other mental health professions"), Attitude toward Profession (e.g., "I value the advancement and the future of my profession"), and Engagement in Counseling Profession ("I keep involved in ongoing discussions with counseling professionals about identity and the vision of my profession"). The subscale Professional Competency (3 items) was not included due to language of items being closely related to the construct of counseling self-efficacy. The Professional Competency subscale accounts for three items of the PISC-S; therefore, the PISC-S was only comprised of 13 items in the present study.

**Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (Appendix E)**

The Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES; Melchert et al., 1996) is a measure of one's knowledge and competency of providing counseling services (e.g., "My knowledge of personality development is adequate for counseling effectively"). Items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "agree strongly" (1) to "disagree strongly" (5). There are no subscales within the CSES. Higher scores on the CSES indicate a high degree of self-efficacy.

Melchert et al. (1996) computed the internal consistency of the CSES and found a Cronbach's Alpha of .91. The CSES was administered twice to participants ($N = 89$) in

the instrument's validation study over the course of one week. Melchert and colleagues found the test-retest reliability coefficient over the course of the two administrations to be .85. Convergent construct validity of the CSES was generated through comparison with the Self-Efficacy Inventory (Friedlander & Snyder, 1993). The two instruments were found to be highly correlated ($r = .83$). A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine if participants' amount of clinical experience and training resulted in higher CSES scores. Both the amount of training and clinical experience were found to be statistically significant ($p < .0001$) predicators of CSES scores and accounted for a significant portion of the variance of scores on the CSES (43%; $R = .65$). The training level of participants accounted for more of the variance (18%) than clinical experience (14%). ANOVAs were computed and provided evidence for there being a statistically significant ($p < .0001$) difference between groups with no clinical experience and those with full-time clinical experience.

## Summary of Methodology

The purpose of the present study was to investigate if CTs' degree of academic entitlement and/or degree of counselor professional identity predicted their degree of counseling self-efficacy. Participants included in the study were CTs who were currently enrolled in practicum or internship at a CACREP accredited master's-level counselor education program. Each participant completed a demographic questionnaire, which included confirmation of enrollment in practicum or internship, age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, number of counseling-related courses completed, and number of counseling-related conferences and workshops attended. Additionally, participants completed the Academic Entitlement Scale (AES; Chowning & Campbell, 2009),

Professional Identity Scale in Counseling – Short Form (PISC-S; Woo et al., 2018), and the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES; Melchert et al., 1996). After all prerequisite statistical assumptions were confirmed, one hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine if academic entitlement and/or degree of counselor professional identity predicted the degree of counseling self-efficacy among CTs, controlling for one covariate (i.e., total number of counseling-related courses completed).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of the present study was to investigate if counselor trainees' (CTs)

degree of academic entitlement and/or degree of counselor professional identity predicted

their degree of counseling self-efficacy. CTs' completed a demographic questionnaire,

the Academic Entitlement Scale (AES), the Professional Identity Scale in Counseling –

Short Form (PISC-S), and the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES). The research

examined CTs' perceptions of their own levels of academic entitlement, counselor

professional identity, and counseling self-efficacy. IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27) was

the statistical software utilized to analyze the data. Complete results from statistical

analyses are reviewed in this chapter. Descriptive statistics are discussed first and then

the results of one hierarchical multiple regression analysis testing the null hypotheses is

reviewed. A summary of the present study's results concludes this chapter.

### Descriptive Statistics

#### Data Screening

Prior to analyzing the data, data screening occurred to help ensure that

prerequisite assumptions for the purpose of the study and the omnibus hierarchical

multiple regression analysis were verified. The inclusion criteria for participants was that

they had to be enrolled in practicum or internship at a CACREP accredited master's-level

counselor education program during data collection. Participants had to fully complete

the three survey instruments the AES, the PISC-S, CSES. 166 participants accessed the survey; however, of those participants 69 responses were excluded due to incomplete data or not meeting the inclusion criteria. The total number of participants included in the present study was $N = 97$.

**Descriptive Statistics for Variables**

Separate descriptive statistics for the independent variables (IVs) and the dependent variable (DV) were calculated according to each of the instruments scoring procedures prior to data analysis. Two of the IVs in the present study were subscales from the AES. The AES is a 15-item measure of academic entitlement which utilizes a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). Higher scores on the AES are representative of higher levels of academic entitlement. Externalized Responsibility (10 items) and Entitled Expectations (five items) comprise the two subscales of the instrument (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). Three of the IVs in the present study were subscales from the PISC-S. The PISC-S is a is a 16-item measure of counselor professional identity which utilizes a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from "not at all in agreement" (1) to "totally in agreement" (6). Higher scores on the PISC-S are representative of higher levels of academic entitlement. There are four subscales within the PISC-S: Professional Knowledge (six items), Professional Competency (three items), Attitude toward Profession (three items), and Engagement in Counseling Profession (four items; Woo et al., 2018). The subscale Professional Competency was not included in the present study due to language of items being closely related to the construct of counseling self-efficacy, resulting in the PISC-S being a total of 13 items. The DV in the present study was assessed by the CSES, a measure of

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counseling self-efficacy. The CSES is a 20-item instrument and items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "agree strongly" (1) to "disagree strongly" (5). Higher scores on the CSES are representative of higher levels of counseling self-efficacy. There are no subscales within the CSES.

For the total sample ($N = 97$), means, standard deviations, and ranges of the AES subscales, PISC-S subscales, and the CSES were calculated. Participants' mean total score on the AES subscale of Externalized responsibility was 18.59 ($SD = 6.16$, *Range* = 10 to 38). The total mean score for the AES subscale of Entitled Expectations was 16.84 ($SD = 5.99$, *Range* = 6 to 34). For the PISC-S subscales, the Professional Knowledge subscale possessed a mean total score of 26.16 ($SD = 5.66$, *Range* = 9 to 36). The Attitude toward Profession subscale had a total mean score of 15.77 ($SD = 2.11$, *Range* = 10 to 18). The final subscale of Engagement in the Counseling Profession produced a mean total score of 14.20 ($SD = 4.59$, *Range* = 4 to 24). For the CSES, the total mean score was 103.64 ($SD = 8.57$, *Range* = 86 to 120). Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the IVs and DV.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables (AES, PISC-S) and Dependent Variable (CSES)

| Variable | *M* | *SD* | Possible Range | Actual Range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| AES Externalized Responsibility | 18.59 | 6.16 | 10-70 | 10-38 |
| AES Entitled Expectations | 16.84 | 5.99 | 5-35 | 6-34 |
| PICS-S Professional Knowledge | 26.16 | 5.66 | 6-36 | 9-36 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| PISC-S Attitude toward Profession | 15.77 | 2.11 | 6-18 | 10-18 |
| PISC-S Engagement in Counseling Profession | 14.20 | 4.59 | 4-24 | 4-24 |
| CSES Total Score | 103.64 | 8.57 | 20-100 | 86-120 |

**Testing for Hierarchical Regression Assumptions**

Prior to analyzing results, the data were screened for statistical outliers. No outliers were found. Therefore, the following prerequisite assumptions for hierarchical multiple regression analysis were tested: multivariate normality, multicollinearity, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Multivariate normality was tested utilizing a Kolmogorov-Sminrov test; result of the test was .09 ($p = .07$). The result was non-significant ($p > .05$), indicating a normal distribution of CSES scores (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017). Multicollinearity was examined through the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance levels, which indicates if there are high intercorrelations between predictor variables. The VIF should yield a value less than 10, and tolerance levels should be greater than .25, as an acceptable indicator of how much beta coefficients are affected by the presence of other predictor variables in a model (Stevens, 2009). Each of the variables met the assumption of collinearity: total credits (Tolerance = .92, VIF = 1.09), Externalized Responsibility (Tolerance = .69, VIF = 1.46), Entitled Expectations (Tolerance = .82, VIF = 1.22), Professional Knowledge (Tolerance = .54, VIF = 1.85), Attitude toward Profession (Tolerance = .66, VIF = 1.52), and Engagement in Counseling Profession (Tolerance = .68, VIF = 1.48).

The assumption of normality was confirmed through analysis of a normality plot (see Figure 1) demonstrating linearity, and a histogram demonstrating a normal

distribution (see Figure 2). Homoscedasticity was assumed due to a residual plot (see Figure 3) demonstrating a scattered plot with no distinct pattern. Acceptable standard residuals should fall between negative three and three (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017). The standard residual statistics for the present study had a minimum of -2.96 and a maximum of 1.91.
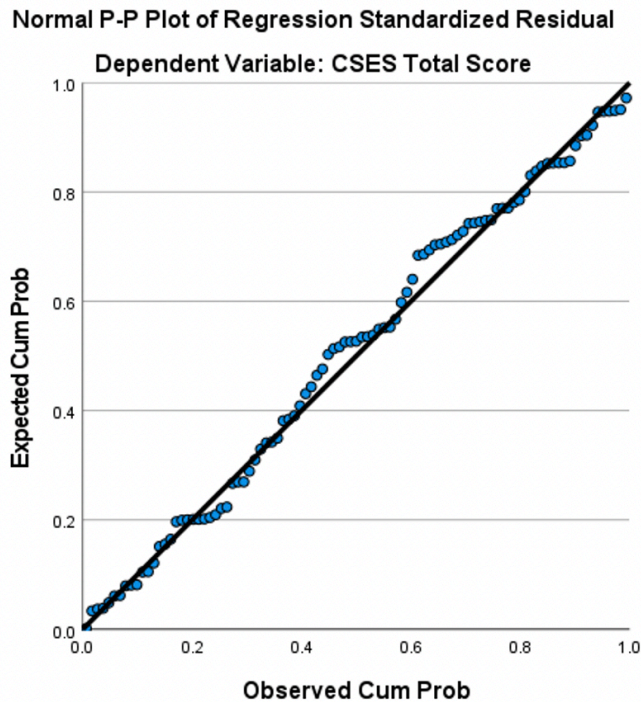


Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
Dependent Variable: CSES Total Score

Figure 1

Normality Plot for CSES

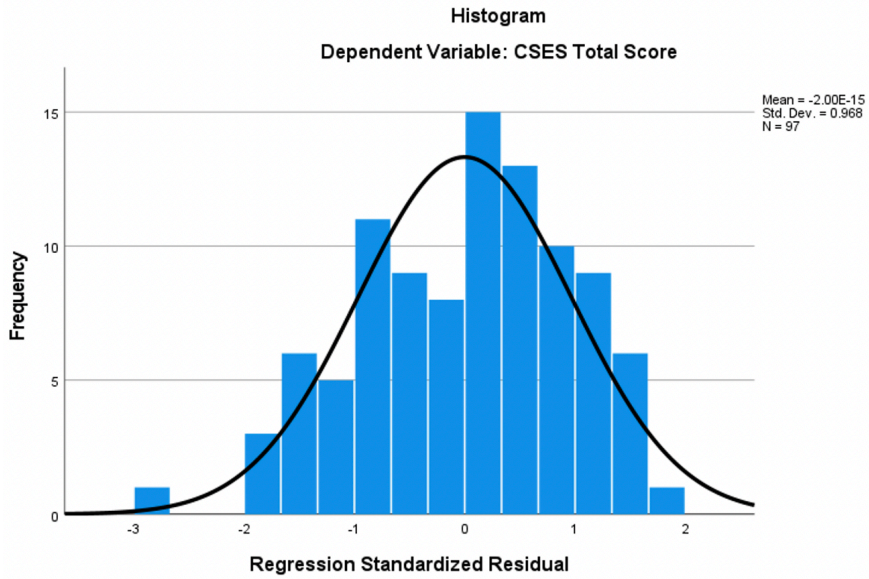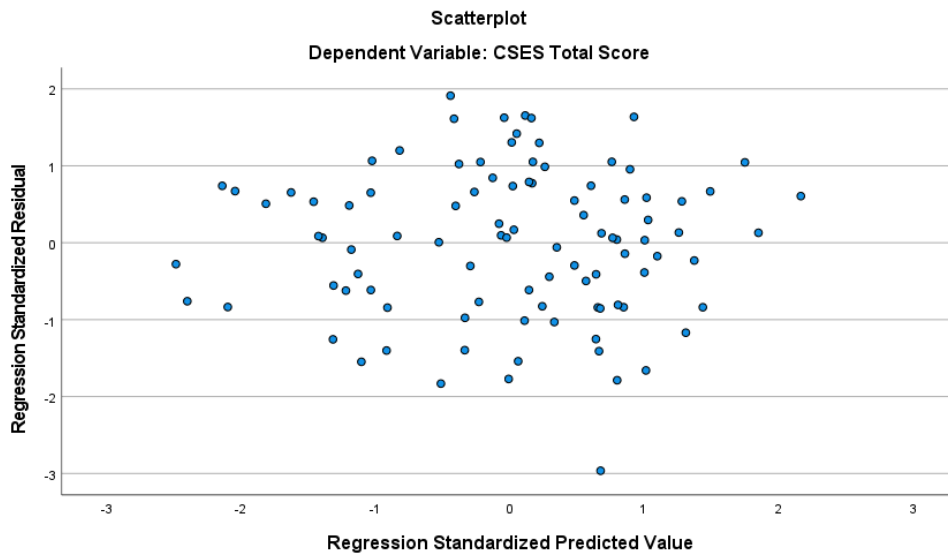Figure 2

Histogram for Normality of CSES



Figure 3

Residual Plot for CSES for Homoscedasticity

# Inferential Statistics

As a first step toward understanding inferential statistical analyses, and before the omnibus hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted, a Pearson correlation was reviewed for the DV and the IVs to examine if there were statistically significant relationships between these variables. Findings from this analysis indicated there was a statistically significant negative correlation ($p < .05$) between CSES scores and the subscales of the AES (e.g., Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations). These findings indicate that higher levels of externalized responsibility and entitled expectations are both related to lower levels of counseling self-efficacy. There was a statistically significant positive correlation ($p < .05$) between CSES scores and two of the subscales of the PISC-S (e.g., Professional Knowledge and Attitude toward Profession). These findings indicated that increased professional knowledge and a stronger positive attitude towards the counseling profession were both related to higher levels of counseling self-efficacy. The PISC-S subscale of Engagement in Counseling Profession was not statistically significantly correlated with CSES scores. Table 4 provides a summary of the Pearson correlation between the DV and IVs.

Table 4

Pearson Correlations Between CSES Scores, AES Subscale Scores, and PISC-S Subscale Scores

| Variable | CSES | Externalized Responsibility | Entitled Expectations | Professional Knowledge | Attitude toward Profession | Engagement in Counseling Profession |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CSES | 1.00 | -.35* | -.21* | .46* | .47* | .11 |
| Externalized Responsibility | -.35* | 1.00 | .40* | .40* | -.46* | -.18* |

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Entitled Expectations | -.21* | .40* | 1.00 | -.19* | -.22* | -.03 |
| Professional Knowledge | .46* | -.32* | -.19* | 1.00 | .48* | .55* |
| Attitude toward Profession | .47* | -.46* | -.22* | .48* | 1.00 | .28* |
| Engagement in Counseling Profession | .11 | -.18* | -.03 | .55* | .28* | 1.00 |

Note. *p* < .05*

Next, a Pearson correlation was conducted between CSES scores and relevant demographic variables (e.g., total courses completed and additional trainings attended) in order to identify if either of these demographic variables would need to be included as a covariate during the hierarchical multiple regression analysis. To determine statistical significance, an alpha level of .05 was used. Results from the bivariate correlation analysis indicated there was a statistically significant relationship (*p* < .05) between the demographic variable total courses completed and CSES scores. Therefore, this demographic variable was considered a covariate in order to control for its influence during the hierarchical multiple regression analysis. There was not a statistically significant relationship between the demographic variable number of trainings and CSES scores. Table 5 provides a summary of the findings from the bivariate correlation analysis.

Table 5

Bivariate Correlations Between Demographic Variables and CSES Scores

| Demographic Variable | | CSES |
|---|---|---|
| Courses Completed | Pearson Correlation | .22* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .03 |
| | N | 97 |
| Additional Trainings | Pearson Correlation | -.05 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .65 |
| | N | 97 |

Note. $p < .05*$

After prerequisite statistical assumptions were verified and one covariate was identified, the omnibus hierarchical multiple regression analysis was completed. The first step of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis was to include the covariate total courses completed. In the second step, the five IVs were included: two subscales of the AES and three subscales of the PISC-S. In step one, the model summary indicated that the control variable total courses completed explained a statistically significant amount of variance in CSES scores. When including the IVs (e.g., subscales of the AES and PISC-S) in the second step, it was found that a statistically significant amount of variance in CSES scores was explained by the IVs above and beyond the control variable. Table 6 provides a summary of the hierarchical multiple regression model.

Table 6

CSES Hierarchical Regression Model Summary ($N = 97$)

| Step | $R$ | $R^2$ | $R^2_{adj.}$ | $\Delta R^2$ | $F_{chg}$ | $df_1$ | $df_2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Demographic Variable (Total Courses Completed) | .22 | .05 | .04 | .05 | 4.70* | 1 | 95 |
| 2. Independent Variables (Subscales of AES and PISC-S) | .61 | .37 | .33 | .32 | 9.10* | 5 | 90 |

Note. $p < .05$*

Results from the hierarchical multiple regression model summary (see Table 6) indicated that the overall model was statistically significant, $R^2 = .37$, $R^2$adj. $= .33$, $F(5, 90)$, $p < .001$. Approximately 37% of the variance of participants' CSES total scores were accounted for by the IVs. The model indicated that the IVs, when taken together, statistically significantly predicted CSES scores. As shown in Table 7, results from the ANOVA for the CSES scores further demonstrates statistically significant results.

Table 7

ANOVA Summary Results

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Regression | 332.30 | 1 | 332.30 | 4.70* | .03* |
| | Residual | 6720.07 | 95 | 70.74 | | |
| | Total | 7052.37 | 96 | | | |
| 2 | Regression | 2588.54 | 6 | 431.42 | 8.70* | <.001* |
| | Residual | 4463.83 | 90 | 49.60 | | |
| | Total | 7052.37 | 96 | | | |

Note. $p < .05$*

Coefficient statistics (see Table 8) showed that two of the IVs primarily accounted for results in the omnibus hierarchical multiple regression analysis. These two IVs were statistically significant positive predictors of CSES scores among CTs, when controlling for the other IVs and total number of courses completed: Professional Knowledge ($t = 2.97$, $p < .05$) and Attitude toward Profession ($t = 2.94$, $p < .05$). Professional Knowledge was the strongest predictor of CSES scores ($\beta = .34$). These results indicated that when CTs possess higher levels of professional knowledge and/or have a stronger positive attitude towards the counseling profession, their counseling self-efficacy increases.

Table 8

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Coefficients for CSES Scores

| Variable | B | $\beta$ | $t$ | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Externalized Responsibility | -.18 | -.13 | -1.29 | .20 |
| Entitled Expectations | -.03 | -.02 | -.21 | .83 |
| Professional Knowledge | .51 | .34 | 2.97* | .004* |
| Attitude toward Profession | 1.24 | .30 | 2.94* | .004* |
| Engagement in Counseling Profession | -.33 | -.18 | -1.71 | .09 |

Note. $p < .05$*

Other IVs in the present study (e.g., subscales of the AES and the PISC-S subscale of Engagement in Counseling Profession), were not statistically significant predictors of CTs' counseling self-efficacy.

## Summary of Results

Prior to analyzing results, the data was screened for statistical outliers, and no outliers were found. Prerequisite assumptions for the omnibus hierarchical multiple regression analysis were then tested, and each of the assumptions were met. A Pearson correlation was first conducted between the IVs (two subscales of the AES and three subscales of the PISC-S) and the DV (CSES scores). A statistically significant negative correlation between CSES scores and AES subscale scores was found. There was a statistically significant positive correlation between CSES scores and two subscales of the PISC-S. A Pearson correlation was then conducted between the DV and relevant demographic variables to identify possible covariates. Total courses completed by students was identified as a covariate. The hierarchical multiple regression analysis controlling for total courses completed showed that two IVs (subscales of PISC-S; Professional Knowledge and Attitude toward Profession) were statistically significant positive predictors of CSES scores among CTs. Other IVs in the present study were not statistically significant predictors of CTs' counseling self-efficacy.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to investigate if counselor trainees' (CTs) degree of academic entitlement and/or degree of counselor professional identity predicted their degree of counseling self-efficacy. It was anticipated the research study could contribute to counselor educators' and supervisors' understanding of CTs' development while promoting counseling self-efficacy in CTs themselves. 97 CTs participated in the present study. Participants completed four self-report measures: a demographic questionnaire, the Academic Entitlement Scale (AES), the Professional Identity Scale in Counseling – Short Form (PISC-S), and the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES). One hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted between the subscales of the AES (Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations), three subscales of the PISC-S (Professional Knowledge, Attitude toward Profession, and Engagement in Counseling Profession), and the CSES while controlling for the effect of total number of counseling-related courses completed.

Findings from the hierarchical multiple regression analysis indicated that Professional Knowledge and Attitude toward Profession were statistically significant positive predictors of counseling self-efficacy. Neither of the AES subscales nor the PISC-S subscale of Engagement in the Counseling Profession were predictors of

counseling self-efficacy. A comparison of the present study's results to previous research, implications, and limitations are reviewed in this chapter.

**Present Study's Results Compared to Prior Research**

The first analysis conducted in the present study was a Pearson correlation between the CSES scores and subscales of the AES and PISC-S. It was found that counseling self-efficacy was statistically significantly negatively correlated with academic entitlement; specifically, externalized responsibility and entitled expectations. No study found to date has examined the correlation between academic entitlement and counseling self-efficacy. However, there have been several studies which examined the correlation between academic entitlement and various other forms of self-efficacy (e.g., course self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and general self-efficacy).

Multiple studies have found that course self-efficacy and academic entitlement are negatively correlated (Boswell, 2012; Vallade et al., 2014). Thus, the present study reinforced this negative association. For example, in a study examining the relationship between academic entitlement and academic self-efficacy, it was found that increased academic entitlement was associated with lower self-efficacy (Frey, 2015). Huang (2017) provided support that general self-efficacy was also negatively correlated with academic entitlement. While the present study examined the correlation between counseling self-efficacy and academic entitlement of master's-level students, the aforementioned studies' participants were primarily undergraduate students. The present studies' findings align with previous research's findings that the constructs of academic entitlement and self-efficacy are negatively correlated.

The Pearson correlation analysis conducted in the present study also found that counseling self-efficacy was statistically significantly positively associated with two subscales of the PISC-S: Professional Knowledge and Attitude toward Profession. It was also found that there was not a statistically significant relationship between counseling self-efficacy and the PISC-S subscale of Engagement in Counseling Profession. No study found to date has examined the relationship specifically between counselor professional identity and counseling self-efficacy. However, there have been multiple studies that have examined the relationship between professional identity and self-efficacy.

Brady (2020) found that general self-efficacy is positively correlated with professional identity among master's students enrolled in counselor education programs. It has also been found that general self-efficacy is positively correlated with the professional knowledge of licensed professional counselors (Kautzman-East, 2016). Heled and Davidovitch (2021) found that professional identity and professional efficacy had a statistically significant positive correlation among school counselors. The present study reinforced the findings of the aforementioned studies. However, the findings of the present study provided evidence for the relationship among professional identity and self-efficacy to the counseling profession by examining counselor professional identity and counseling self-efficacy. The present study also aided in the generalizability of these previous findings to a sample of CTs. Various qualitative research studies have found themes of enhanced professional identity being related to higher levels of self-efficacy among counseling students (Gibson et al., 2010) and licensed counselors (Alves & Gazzola, 2011). These qualitative findings were supported through the present study's

quantitative research design supporting a positive correlation between counseling self-efficacy and counselor professional identity.

In order to investigate the primary statistical hypotheses, the present study utilized a multiple hierarchical regression analysis to determine whether academic entitlement and/or professional identity were predictors of counseling self-efficacy. It was found that two subscales of the PISC-S, Professional Knowledge and Attitude toward Profession, were statistically significant positive predictors of counseling self-efficacy (after controlling for the effect of total courses completed). Although no study found to date has examined the interaction between these exact variables, prior researchers have published similar findings.

For example, Brady (2020) examined if a professional identity in counseling was a predictor of self-efficacy. There were 220 participants in the study who had recently graduated from master's-level counselor education programs or were currently enrolled in the programs. Although the participants included in Brady's study were different from the present study's sample (e.g., CTs), participants were still affiliated with master's-level counselor education programs. Each of the participants in the present study were currently enrolled in master's-level counselor education programs. The PISC and New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE) were utilized to assess participants' levels of professional identity and self-efficacy (Brady, 2020). The present study utilized different instruments including the short form of the PISC (PISC-S) to measure professional identity and the CSES to measure counseling self-efficacy. A third instrument was utilized by Brady to assess participants' perceptions of counselor educators' professional identity, supervisor's professional identity and supervisor's encouragement of the

postgraduate supervisees' professional identity subscales of the Appraisal of Counselor Educators' Professional Identity instrument. This construct was not examined in the present study as the AES was utilized to measure academic entitlement. Similar to the present study, Brady (2020) found that two subscales of the PISC (Knowledge of the Profession and Attitudes toward the Profession) were predictors of self-efficacy. It was also found that the Engagement Behavior subscale of the PISC was not a predictor of self-efficacy. The present study also found that the PISC-S subscale of Engagement in Counseling Profession was not a predictor of counseling self-efficacy. It is also important to consider the implications discussed by Brady.

When discussing application to Bandura's self-efficacy theory, Brady (2020) highlighted how their study's findings align with the theory. It was found that knowledge of the counseling profession (exposure to an activity) positively predicted self-efficacy. It was also found that one's attitude towards the counseling profession positively predicted self-efficacy; the author reviewed how attitude positively impacts one's motivation which results in higher levels of self-efficacy. Both of these findings were supported in the present study. Brady also reviewed how their findings apply to the counseling profession by discussing the importance of counselor educators developing counseling students' professional identity in order to promote their self-efficacy development. This implication is important for the present study as other counseling professionals (e.g., professors and supervisors) should encourage professional identity development among CTs to develop counseling self-efficacy. Brady identified a limitation of their study being the number of items (73; demographic questionnaire not included) participants had to answer when completing three of their instruments. The present study addressed this

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limitation as the total number of items in three of the present study's instruments (AES, PISC-S, and CSES) was 48. Another limitation identified by Brady, which is an appropriate consideration for the present study, is that individuals who voluntarily participate in research may have higher levels of professional identity. Lastly, Brady discussed an area of future research being continued examination of the interaction between professional identity and self-efficacy. The present study provided a further examination of these constructs as it examined how professional identity impacts counseling self-efficacy specifically, rather than general self-efficacy that was examined by Brady. Additional research has further explored the relationship between professional identity and other forms of self-efficacy, such as professional efficacy.

Heled and Davidovitch (2021) conducted a research study to define and measure professional identity in the school counseling profession. There were 174 school counselors from Israel who participated in the study. The researchers combined two adapted measures of professional identity to create a new measure of school counselors' professional identity: Teachers' Professional Identity Scale and the Professional Identity Scale in Counseling. Professional efficacy was measured by the professional advocacy factor in the personal professional identity questionnaire. It was found that professional efficacy was a statistically significant positive predictor of professional identity. Compared to the present study, participants and measures utilized in the two studies were different. The present study examined the level of CTs' professional identity utilizing the PISC-S and self-efficacy utilizing the CSES. Heled and Davidovitch examined the professional identity and professional efficacy of licensed school counselors who are no longer enrolled in counselor education programs. Another difference between the two

studies was that Heled and Davidovitch examined professional efficacy as a predictor variable. The present study examined counseling self-efficacy as the variable being predicted. Similarly, both studies found there is a positive interaction between professional identity and self-efficacy; higher levels of professional identity indicated higher levels of self-efficacy. Implications of Heled and Davidovitch are reviewed next.

Heled and Davidovitch (2021) discussed how their findings aligned with the self-efficacy component of social cognitive theory in that greater levels of professional efficacy possessed a positive relationship with one's professional knowledge. This finding indicated that developed traits of professional identity are correlated with professional efficacy. Similarly, the present study found two characteristics of professional identity, professional knowledge and one's attitude towards the counseling profession, possessed a positive relationship with counseling self-efficacy. Heled and Davidovitch discussed the importance of developing and understanding school counselors' professional identity in order to promote professional efficacy within the field of school counseling. The present study expanded upon these findings; the development of CTs' professional identity may promote counseling self-efficacy. One suggestion provided by Heled and Davidovitch for an area of further study was that research should examine the implications professional identity has in other specific populations and groups. The present study addressed this recommendation by examining CTs' professional identity's predictability of counseling self-efficacy. A limitation of Heled and Davidovitch's study was the generalizability of the study's findings due to it being conducted with school counselors from Israel. The present study addressed generalizability of these findings to CTs in the United States. Heled and Davidovitch

found that professional efficacy, not counseling self-efficacy, was a predictor of professional identity. The present study further explored the relationship between professional identity and self-efficacy by finding that counseling self-efficacy was predicted by specific traits of professional identity (e.g., knowledge of the counseling professional and attitude towards the profession). Previous research has also examined the interaction between academic entitlement and another form of self-efficacy.

Vallade et al. (2014) examined the impact academic entitlement has on student learning. There were 150 undergraduate students from a single mid-Atlantic university in the United States that participated in the study. Academic entitlement was measured by the AES and self-efficacy was measured by the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire's (MSLQ) self-efficacy subscale. Self-efficacy pertaining to participants' ability to complete coursework was the specific form of self-efficacy examined. Their findings provided evidence for academic entitlement being negatively correlated and a predictor of self-efficacy. Participants in Vallade and colleagues' study differed from the present study as they were undergraduate students who were enrolled in communication courses. Each of the participants in the present study were master's-level students enrolled in counselor education programs. Both studies utilized the AES to measure participants' level of academic entitlement. Between the present study and Vallade and colleagues' study, two different measures of self-efficacy and types of self-efficacy were examined. The present study examined counseling self-efficacy utilizing the CSES. The present study's overall findings were different from Vallade and colleagues. Although academic entitlement was found to be negatively correlated with counseling self-efficacy, academic entitlement was not a predictor of counseling self-efficacy in the present study.

The difference in the types of self-efficacy (i.e., course work compared to counseling) being examined in the two studies may explain the inconsistency between the present study's findings and that of Vallade and colleagues.

While discussing the self-efficacy component of Bandura's social cognitive theory, Vallade et al. (2014) highlighted how the theory emphasizes individual choice for behaviors. The researchers referenced how those who are academically entitled demonstrated a lack of individual responsibility; possess a tendency to externalize responsibility and expectation for success. These characteristics are opposite of one another and explains their findings for why academic entitlement possessed a negative relationship with self-efficacy. These findings are supported in the present study and generalized to the relationship between academic entitlement and counseling self-efficacy of counseling students. Although traits of academic entitlement were not found to be a predictor of counseling self-efficacy, the Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations subscales of the AES were found to be negatively correlated with counseling self-efficacy. When discussing the application of their findings, Vallade and colleagues discussed how it is important for educators to consider how students who are academically entitled can have a poorer perception of their knowledge and skills. This is also an important consideration for counselor educators as they work with CTs. If a CT is demonstrating academically entitled behaviors, it is important to explore with this student their perception of their counseling self-efficacy as they may lack confidence in their counseling knowledge and skills. One limitation of Vallade and colleagues' study was that they used the expectancy component subscale of the MSLQ to measure participants' self-efficacy. The expectancy component subscale measures both self-efficacy and

expectancy for success (Pintrich et al., 1991). Therefore, the participants' level of self-efficacy measured by Vallade et al. (2014) may have been influenced by expectancy for success and not necessarily self-efficacy. The present study accounted for this limitation by utilizing the CSES; a valid and reliable measure of counseling self-efficacy (Melchert et al., 1996).

<div align="center">

**Implications**

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**Implications for Self-Efficacy Theory**

According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy theory assumes that psychological processes and direct experiences strengthen and even create expectations of one's personal efficacy. These psychological processes and experiences instill beliefs that individuals are able to execute necessary behaviors needed to succeed at a given task. Self-efficacy theory therefore emphasizes how self-perception and actions are influenced by the interaction between internal and external factors (Bandura, 1997). Personal factors (cognition, affective, and biological) and reliance of self and others to obtain desired outcomes are some of the internal and external influences of individuals' self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 2002). Understanding these personal and external influences on self-efficacy was essential for the implications of the present study.

One personal component of perceived self-efficacy is an individual's perception of their own responsibility and ability to obtain a desired result (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Academic entitlement has been associated with externalized responsibility for their academic outcomes and a belief that their success is reliant on others (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Jeffres et al., 2014). Considering results beyond the main hierarchical multiple regression analysis (and statistical hypotheses), despite the present study's

findings that academic entitlement was not a predictor of counseling self-efficacy, there was a negative bivariate correlation between academic entitlement and counseling self-efficacy. The present study found that lower levels of entitled expectations and externalized responsibility was related to higher levels of counseling self-efficacy. It should be noted these results may be influenced by unknown factors. The bivariate correlational analysis did not take into account the influence of covariates and other independent variables that were accounted for in the omnibus hierarchical multiple regression analysis. However, although cautionary, these findings align with the self-efficacy theory's position that personal responsibility, and not relying too heavily on others, may be related to higher levels of counseling self-efficacy. Some sources of self-efficacy involve receiving feedback from others, such as verbal persuasion. Verbal persuasion is when peers, instructors, supervisors, and clients provide feedback to CTs regarding their counseling skills (Borders et al., 2012; Ikonomopoulos et al., 2016). Daniels and Larson (2001) supported the importance of verbal persuasion for CTs' self-efficacy. It was found that feedback influences CTs' counseling self-efficacy and anxiety. However, those who are academically entitled may not be receptive, or rely too heavily, on others' feedback to inform their counseling self-efficacy. This finding has important implications for self-efficacy theory as one's personal characteristics, such as academic entitlement, must be considered when determining how to best foster their counseling self-efficacy development. Personal characteristics of counselors can have an influence on their counseling self-efficacy.

Larson (1998) utilized Bandura's social cognitive model to convey a social cognitive model of counselor training (SCMCT). The SCMCT model provides insight of

how various aspects of counselors' personal agency influence their counseling self-efficacy. One personal agency component identified as having an influence on counseling self-efficacy was counseling knowledge. Larson discussed how being knowledgeable of the counseling profession can reinforce self-efficacy beliefs. The present study provided further evidence for their being a positive correlation between the professional knowledge trait of counselor professional identity and counseling self-efficacy. It was also found in the present study that counseling-related courses completed was positively correlated with counseling self-efficacy. The implication of these findings and SCMCT is that those in the counseling profession should seek ways to enhance their counseling-related knowledge in order to develop their counseling self-efficacy. One way this can be accomplished is through engaging in counselor education experiences such as counselor education courses.

Gaining knowledge is important for individuals to assess and fulfill personal and professional goals (Bandura, 1982). The present study's findings align with the claims of self-efficacy theory. For example, the present study found that knowledge of the counseling profession is a positive predictor of counseling self-efficacy. This finding demonstrated how individuals who perceive themselves as being knowledgeable of their profession possess greater levels of self-efficacy. Previous research has also supported this finding of the relationship between knowledge and self-efficacy. Mullen et al. (2016) examined the relationship between counselors' ethical and legal knowledge and their ethical and legal self-efficacy. It was found that ethical and legal knowledge possessed a positive relationship with ethical and legal self-efficacy; indicating that knowledge contributes to individuals' beliefs in their ability to complete a task. The positive

contribution knowledge has on mastery experience, a primary source of self-efficacy, can result in higher levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). CTs should engage in activities such as counseling experiences and continued education (e.g., courses, trainings, workshops, etc.) that enhance their knowledge of the counseling profession. Findings from the present study and previous research indicate that these experiences will positively contribute to CTs' counseling self-efficacy and experiences with providing counseling services. Not only does knowledge contribute to self-efficacy, but one's attitude regarding their profession has implications as well.

Self-efficacy has also been associated with how satisfied an individual is as they complete a task (Bandura, 1993). Findings from the present study support these claims of self-efficacy theory. For example, the present study found that one's attitude towards the counseling profession is a positive predictor of counseling self-efficacy. This finding indicates that higher levels of self-efficacy are predicted by positive attitudes towards a profession. Specifically, in the counseling field, a negative attitude towards the profession has been supported in literature as being related to lower levels of self-efficacy, and low self-efficacy may indicate job dissatisfaction which can further diminish self-efficacy beliefs (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Tirpak & Schlosser, 2015). Each of the aforementioned findings have implications for self-efficacy theory. The role of attitude towards a profession in the development of self-efficacy cannot be ignored. Attitude towards their profession must be considered as individuals develop their self-efficacy. Another consideration is how self-efficacy may be adversely impacted by job dissatisfaction. Emotional arousal is one of the primary sources of self-efficacy and is described as interpreting competency based on an emotional state (Bandura, 1977). Experiencing

negative emotional arousal, such as job dissatisfaction, can decrease self-efficacy. Self-efficacy development can be promoted by resolving the emotional arousal (Kirk et al., 2011; Ng & Lucianetti, 2016). Culture is another consideration when considering the present study's implications for self-efficacy theory.

When discussing the influence of culture on self-efficacy development, Bandura (2002) stated that "different forms of perceived self-efficacy play out differently in the different cultural milieus" (p. 280). Oettingen (1995) further described the influence culture has on perspectives of self-efficacy beliefs by discussing how sources of self-efficacy vary across cultures. For example, individuals who are from collectivist systems may find feedback from others as a more meaningful than individuals from individualist systems. Findings from the present study indicated that certain traits of professional identity possess a positive relationship with counseling self-efficacy among CTs, but it was also found that the professional identity trait of engagement with the counseling profession was not a predictor of counseling self-efficacy. The cultural make-up of participants in the present study must be considered when considering the implications and findings of the present study. Each of the participants in the present study were enrolled in counselor education programs in the United States, which is predominantly an individualist system. In a culture which is collectivist in nature, it is possible that engagement with the counseling profession could have a stronger relationship with self-efficacy. Future research may consider investigating if academic entitlement and/or professional identity are predictors of counseling self-efficacy among different populations (e.g., different types of clinical trainees or licensed mental health

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professionals from other countries). However, the present study's findings and implications are broadly applicable to CTs.

**Implications for Counselor Trainees' Clinical Practice**

There are multiple implications from the present study which are applicable to counseling practice. It was found that professional knowledge and attitude towards the counseling profession were positive predictors of counseling self-efficacy. These findings imply that CTs who are knowledgeable of the counseling profession, and/or have a positive attitude towards the profession, are likely to have a greater sense of counseling self-efficacy. These results are important for those who are practicing counseling, such as CTs.

According to findings from the present study, as CTs increase their knowledge of the counseling profession, they are likely to increase their perceived ability to counsel clients effectively. This finding is important as CTs often doubt their ability to provide counseling services (Flasch et al., 2016; Ikonomopoulos et al., 2016; Kurtyilmaz, 2015). CTs may focus on enhancing their knowledge of the counseling profession by gaining an understanding of the standards of the profession and their professional roles in order to offset the doubts they possess regarding their counseling skills (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014; Woo & Henfield, 2015; Woo et al., 2017). CTs can better assess whether or not they are meeting the standards of the counseling profession, and if they are fulfilling their role as a counselor, by knowing what standards and roles they must fulfill. Bandura (1982) discussed how gaining knowledge provides an avenue for individuals to assess and fulfill standards, personally and professionally. It is also important that CTs are aware of their attitude towards the counseling profession.

CTs' satisfaction with their role as a future counselor will also increase their perceived ability to counsel clients competently. It is well documented in research how lack of satisfaction in a professional role can have adverse consequences. CTs are having their first exposure to what it is like to be a counselor in the clinical portion of their training. During this first experience, they are learning what they like and dislike about practicing as a counselor. Blount et al. (2018) discussed how there can be negative consequences to being in a helping profession such as counseling. Two of the identified possible consequences of being in a helping profession were burnout and stress. Burnout and stress can lead to poor professional outcomes due to diminished physical and psychological well-being, job dissatisfaction, higher likelihood of turnover, ineffective practice, and client disengagement/poor outcomes for clients (Yang & Hayes, 2020). According to findings from the present study, having a positive attitude towards the counseling profession has a positive relationship with counseling self-efficacy. Possessing higher levels of counseling self-efficacy has been associated with increased performance in counseling (e.g., counseling effectively and perception of skills), positive client outcomes, lower rates of burnout, and the development of professional identity (Aliyev & Tunc, 2015; Flasch et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2010; Jaafar et al., 2009; Larson & Daniels, 1998; Urbani et al., 2002). Findings from the present study also have implications for ethical clinical practice.

The present study found that CTs may enhance their counseling self-efficacy through developing their professional identity. Being knowledgeable of the standards and roles for counselors is a trait of possessing a professional identity (Woo & Henfield, 2015; Woo et al., 2017). According to findings from the present study, knowledge of the

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profession was a predictor of counseling self-efficacy. Previous research has also supported the notion that enhanced self-efficacy has a positive relationship with ethical knowledge in the counseling profession (Mullen et al., 2016). The American Counseling Association ([ACA] 2014) *Code of Ethics* refers to ethical codes as standards, "The standards that outline professional responsibilities and provide direction for fulfilling those ethical responsibilities" (p. 3). Therefore, not only do CTs have an ethical mandate to be knowledgeable about their ethical standards, but they can also contribute to the development of their counseling self-efficacy by being knowledgeable of ethical standards.

CTs also have an ethical responsibility to participate in national associations, advocate, and are encouraged to engage in service work (ACA, 2014). Each of these responsibilities are components of possessing a professional identity in counseling (Woo et al., 2018). Although the professional identity trait of engagement in the counseling profession was not found to be a predictor of counseling self-efficacy in the present study, engagement with the profession is still important. When CTs uphold their ethical responsibility of engaging in the aforementioned tasks they may assist with both direct care to clients and more broadly advancing the counseling profession (ACA, 2014). Along with ethical implications, and how professional identity can enhance the counseling profession as a whole, these findings emphasize the importance of counselor professional identity.

**Implications for Counselor Trainees' Academic Performance**

CTs are in a prime position to develop their counseling self-efficacy and professional identity; the first and most influential time to develop these traits is

presented during master's-level counselor education programs (Moss et al., 2014; Mullen et al., 2015; Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Often times, CTs may experience fear during the clinical phases of their program due to having doubts regarding their abilities to perform certain counseling-related tasks (Flasch et al., 2016). It has been found that not possessing a professional identity can contribute to a lack of confidence in counseling abilities (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Moss et al., 2014). One implication of the present study for CTs is that they can enhance their confidence with counseling related tasks by developing their professional identity. CTs may enhance their self-efficacy by increasing their knowledge of the profession and taking pride in being in the counseling profession.

The present study also found that the number of counseling related courses completed was positively correlated with counseling self-efficacy, aligning with findings from previous research (Mullen et al., 2015). These findings provide evidence that completing coursework has positive implications for self-efficacy. As CTs complete their coursework, there is an opportunity for them to develop their professional knowledge. Woo et al. (2018) described knowledge of the profession as understanding the history of counseling, being aware of organizations/associations of the profession, publications, and being aware of the philosophy of the profession. Professional knowledge was found to be a positive predictor of counseling self-efficacy in the present study. This finding provides support that CTs should be taking the non-clinical portion of their training seriously. CTs may doubt how coursework transitions to clinical practice due to the perception that coursework is too focused on theoretical practice (Flasch et al., 2016). This study provides support that as CTs enhance their knowledge of the profession, it will have positive implications for the level of self-efficacy experienced during the clinical phase of

training. By seeking out opportunities to enhance their knowledge of the counseling profession during the non-clinical phases of training, they may enhance their counseling self-efficacy when they are in clinical training.

CTs should focus on enhancing their counseling self-efficacy by creating a positive attitude towards the counseling profession, according to present study. A positive attitude towards the counseling profession involves taking pride in the profession of counseling (Woo et al., 2018). One way to develop a positive attitude towards the profession is through understanding the role of a counseling professional (Woo et al., 2017). It is not uncommon for CTs to struggle to understand what their role in the counseling profession due to the various roles, training approaches, and theoretical orientations of the profession (Mellin et al., 2011). The lack of understanding can create difficulty adjusting to the expectations of the profession and lead to misconceptions regarding the profession. Struggling to adjust to expectations and possessing misconceptions may lead to future job dissatisfaction (Moss et al., 2014). Therefore, it is important CTs develop awareness of what the counseling workforce looks like to create accurate expectations. Through completing coursework, clinical phases of counselor education programs, and interacting with other counseling professionals, CTs may increase their awareness of what to expect in the counseling field; these experiences will increase attitudes towards the profession (Woo et al., 2017; Woo & Henfield, 2015). According to findings from the present study, if CTs develop a positive attitude towards the counseling profession, their counseling self-efficacy may also increase. Their satisfaction towards the profession may also aid in their understanding of the importance of a professional identity.

It has been found that counselors who are practicing understand the value of developing a professional identity, but do not view the development of professional identity as being important (Burns & Cruikshanks, 2018). Prior to CTs completing their education, it is important the necessity of a professional identity is understood. The present study added to previous research on the importance of developing a professional identity since professional knowledge and attitude towards the profession were found to predict counseling self-efficacy. The present study also has implications for counselor educators and supervisors, and how they can train CTs.

**Implications for Counselor Education and Supervision**

In section 2 of the *2016 Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Program* (CACREP) standards, core standards for the development of professional counseling identity are discussed. There are eight core areas that are representative of the knowledge which are foundational for counselor education programs: Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice, Social and Cultural Diversity, Human Growth and Development, Career Development, Counseling and Helping Relationships, Group Counseling and Group Work, Assessment and Testing, and Research and Program Evaluation (CACREP, 2015). Each of the participants in the present study were enrolled in CACREP-accredited programs, and the results from the present study demonstrated that their professional identity traits of knowledge and attitude towards the counseling profession positively predicted counseling self-efficacy. Each of these traits of professional identity can be further developed by counselor educators and supervisors upholding the aforementioned eight core areas of a professional counseling identity. These standards are important as some authors report

that master's students who are enrolled in CACREP-accredited programs possess higher levels of professional identity than those who are enrolled in non-CACREP-accredited programs (Person et al., 2020). If educators and supervisors uphold these standards for a professional identity in counseling and develop CTs' knowledge and positive attitudes towards the profession, they may also see an increase in CTs' counseling self-efficacy.

Findings from the present study also provided further evidence of the benefits of counselor educators and supervisors upholding this CACREP standard in order to promote students' professional identity. By developing students' professional identity, counselor educators and supervisors may also be able to strengthen students' level of counseling self-efficacy. Due to the positive implications that development of a professional identity has on counseling self-efficacy, and the CACREP standard's influence on professional identity development, a recommendation is to infuse an evaluative component to the CACREP standard.

Woo et al. (2017) recommended that CACREP establish standards that could be practical guidelines for measuring and strengthening professional identity throughout counselor education programs. Counselor educators and supervisors may utilize various assessments of students and/or supervisees professional identity (e.g., PISC or PISC-S) to monitor their development throughout counselor education programs and/or supervision. Monitoring professional identity would not only assist with professional identity development, but could assist with counseling self-efficacy development, according to findings from the present study.

Another recommendation would be the implementation of a course, or standard, that specifically addresses the development of one's attitude towards the profession trait

of counselor professional identity. The course could focus on the development of CTs'
self-awareness of their attitude towards the profession to enhance their counseling self-
efficacy. Attitude towards the counseling profession is the perspective (e.g., pride, belief,
and satisfaction) one holds regarding the profession (Woo & Henfield, 2015). The course
could assist CTs with assessing, monitoring, and actions steps individuals could take to
develop positive attitudes towards counseling. The recommended course would be
beneficial since possessing a unified professional identity within the counseling
profession has been difficult for the profession (Mellin et al, 2011; Woo & Henfield,
2015). It could be implied that assisting CTs with having a unified positive attitude
towards the profession would assist with the professional identity within counseling as a
whole. One CACREP core area that would support such a course would be Counseling
and Helping Relationships which emphasizes the development of counselor
characteristics (CACREP, 2015, Section F.5.). CACREP's eight core areas for
professional counseling identity each have an aspect which contribute to knowledge of
the profession: history of counseling, standards for practice, credentials/certifications,
ethics, counselor associations, and journal specifically for counseling (Woo & Henfield,
2015). Since professional knowledge and attitude towards the counseling profession both
have positive relationships with counseling self-efficacy, these core areas may play a
multifaceted role by developing CTs' professional identity and counseling self-efficacy.

The present study showed there is a strong relationship between knowledge of the
counseling profession, attitude towards the profession, and counseling self-efficacy.
These findings add to existing literature's finding that professional knowledge and a
positive attitude towards the counseling profession could potentially mitigate the

development of counseling self-efficacy. This finding has important implications for counselor educators and supervisors. Counselor educators and supervisors should encourage and provide additional opportunities for CTs to enhance their knowledge of the counseling profession while addressing negative attitudes towards the counseling profession in order to promote counseling self-efficacy development. Mullen et al. (2015) found that a majority of CTs' counseling self-efficacy is developed prior to clinical training and was further enhanced during clinical experiences. It has also been found that counselor educators can promote counseling students' confidence within counseling practice by emphasizing the tasks necessary for professional identity development (Dollarhide et al., 2013). As counselor educators and supervisors work with CTs, they should encourage their development of a professional identity in order to enhance their counseling self-efficacy during this crucial time. There are multiple methods that can be utilized by counselor educators and supervisors to enhance CTs' professional identity.

Validation and feedback play an integral part in the professional identity development of CTs as they begin training programs (Gibson et al., 2010). Through classes and supervision, counselor educators and supervisors are able to provide the validation and feedback CTs require. To be intentional at developing CTs' professional identity to enhance counseling self-efficacy, counselor educators and supervisors can utilize professional identity models to promote CTs' professional identity (Cinotti, 2014). One example of a model that can be utilized is the Gibson et al. (2010) theory of transformational tasks. This theory emphasizes three tasks to accomplish in order to develop CTs' counselor professional identity. The three tasks include: developing a definition of counseling, taking responsibility for one's professional growth, and having a

systemic identity. If counselor educators and supervisors can assist CTs' with the completion of these tasks as they complete coursework and engage in supervision, they can maximize CTs' professional identity development. Counselor educators and supervisors may emphasize the importance of professional identity by having higher expectations (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Through feedback on assignments and supervision sessions, counselor educators and supervisors can communicate the importance of a professional identity. As counselor educators and supervisors focus on enhancing students and supervisees' professional identity, an emphasize should be placed on developing their own professional identity as well.

Woo et al. (2016) suggested that leaders in the counseling field (e.g., counselor educators and supervisors) who develop their professional identity, and then take on the role of a mentor for students, can positively influence students' professional development. This mentorship provides an avenue for leaders to discuss barriers and effective contributions to students' professional identity. Counselor educators and supervisors should seek to possess a professional identity, and be intentional about mentoring CTs, so that they can provide guidance to CTs' as they develop their professional identity. Mentorship can also be a great way to enhance CTs' self-efficacy (Flasch et al., 2016). Not only does counselor educators' and supervisors' own professional identity development assist them with mentoring CTs, but Brady (2020) discussed how the CTs' perceptions of their counselor educators' professional identity has important implications. CTs' perceptions of the professional identity of their counselor educators and supervisors possesses a positive relationship with their own perceived professional identity. If CTs' feel that these individuals do not possess a strong

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professional identity, that can negatively impact their own professional identity. Since mentorship can enhance professional identity and self-efficacy, and professional identity alone can enhance counseling self-efficacy, intentional mentoring could be a great tool utilized by educators and supervisors to assist with CTs' development.

**Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

There were limitations to the present study that have implications for future research. First, there was limited literature directly researching the relationship between academic entitlement, counselor professional identity, and counseling self-efficacy. Xiao and Watson (2019) described a literature review to be a necessary process for research as the advancement of knowledge has to be grounded in pre-existing works. Aside from academic entitlement, professional identity and self-efficacy are task specific constructs. Literature was lacking for the relationship between these three specific constructs collectively in the counseling field. However, there was research which examined the relationships between various forms of professional identity and different types of self-efficacy among CTs. There was also research which examined the relationship between academic entitlement and different forms of self-efficacy among populations other than CTs. Future research could address the gap in the counseling literature by providing additional research on CTs' levels of academic entitlement. Additional research should also be conducted further examining the relationship between academic entitlement, counselor professional identity, and/or counseling self-efficacy.

A second limitation was the demographic makeup of participants in the present study, which could impact generalizability of results. Most of the participants in the study were enrolled in a Clinical Mental Health Counseling program (83.5%). According to the

most recent CACREP *2018 Annual Report*, approximately 55.3% of counseling students are enrolled in a Clinical Mental Health program (CACREP, 2019). A majority of the participants in the present study were also women (83.5%). The most recent report released by CACREP which examined the gender identities of students enrolled in master's-level counseling programs found that 82.9% of students identified as women (CACREP, 2017). Regarding reported race of participants in the study, a majority of the participants self-identified as Caucasian (73.2%). For the race/ethnicity demographics of students enrolled in CACREP (2017) counseling programs, 59.2% of students were reported as being Caucasian. The generalizability of this study's findings to CTs' who are not enrolled in Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs, and for CTs' of color, should be used with caution. Although the percentage of participants who identified as women in the present study is representative of CACREP counseling programs, the generalizability of these findings to CTs' who identify as genders other than women should also be cautioned. Future research should replicate the present study with CTs from counseling programs other than Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs, CTs' of color, and genders other than women to assist with the generalizability of the findings. Through utilizing a different sampling procedure, it is possible that a more diverse sample of participants could have been gathered.

The convenience sampling technique utilized for gathering participants in the present study was a third limitation. Contact information of CACREP accredited master's level counselor education programs liaisons were gathered through the CACREP website directory. Liaisons were sent emails requesting that they forward the online research participation request to CTs who were currently enrolled in their practicum or internship

programs. It is possible that this sampling method did not provide an opportunity for all CTs enrolled in practicum or internship to participate in the study; there is no guarantee the CACREP liaisons forwarded the email to their students. Not knowing whether or not the CACREP liaisons forwarded the research invitation to CTs made it impossible to assess the response rate to the survey. Even if the survey was forwarded, there was no way to determine how many CTs actually read the email. For the CTs who received the research participation request, it is possible they wanted to participate, but did not have the technological resources to do so. Data collection in the present study took place through an online survey. If a CT wanted to participate, but did not have an appropriate device (e.g., phone, computer, etc.) to take the survey, then they would have been excluded from participating in the present study. Different data collection methods such as mailing paper surveys, or conducting interviews in-person, could have prohibited the possible exclusion of individuals who wanted to participate but did not have the technological resources to do so. Another limitation with the sampling method is that there is no way to determine if the professional identity level of participants in the present study is representative of CTs. It is possible that the CTs who participated in the present study possessed higher levels of professional identity as engagement with professional activities (e.g., research participation) and enrollment in a CACREP-accredited schools can positively influence a professional identity in counseling (Person et al., 2020; Woo & Henfield, 2015; Woo et al., 2017). Future researchers may utilize a different sampling technique in order to provide an opportunity for all CTs to participate in their study. Lastly, future research may include a question in their demographic questionnaire regarding what ACA region the participants are from. Adding this question would add

another component to verify the researchers have a diverse and possibly larger sample size.

A fourth limitation was the number of participants in the present study. There were enough participants in the study to exceed the number of required participants needed for a minimum statistical power of .80, but multiple participants' surveys were incomplete and could not be included in the final sample. Of the 166 participants that began the survey, only 97 participants were included in the data analysis. This means that 69 participants (41.6%) were excluded from the data analysis. Of the 69 participants who were excluded, 7.2% were not enrolled in a CACREP program, 58.0% were not enrolled in a counseling practicum or internship, and 34.8% did not fully complete the measures included in the present study. In order to retain additional participants' responses in future research, researchers should not require participants to complete all questions of the measures included in their study. Although a rationale cannot be drawn for why multiple participants did not fully complete their surveys, it is possible that if the excluded participants would have completed their surveys, it could have influenced the findings of the present study. Having a larger sample size can decrease the chances of making a Type II error; incorrectly accepting a null hypothesis that is false (Salkind & Frey, 2020). Although an incentive was provided for participating in the research, a raffle for a $50 Amazon gift card, it is possible this incentive was not enticing enough for participants to complete the survey. Future research could offer multiple and/or larger incentives for participating in research.

A fifth limitation in the present study was with participants' responses to the demographic questionnaire. Participants were asked to report the number of counseling-

related courses they have completed throughout their programs. Some respondents reported the number of credits they have completed throughout their counseling program, rather than the number of courses they have completed. When this occurred, the number of courses completed by the participant had to be estimated. Course credits were converted to completed courses by taking the total amount of credits completed and dividing it by three (an estimated average of a typical master's-level counseling course). Also, some participants reported a range of number of courses completed (e.g., "between 3 and 5"). In this scenario, the researcher assessed the average of the range of numbers and reported that as the total number of courses completed. There was no way of verifying the actual number of counseling-related courses completed by participants who reported credits or a range. To avoid this limitation, future research may add a clarifying statement to this question such as, "Do not report total credits or a range of courses completed." Since total number of counseling-related courses completed was identified as a covariate in the present study, it is important that future researchers have participants report the specific number of counseling-related courses completed if they are examining CTs' counseling self-efficacy. There were also limitations with the instruments selected for assessing the constructs of interest.

The sixth limitation in the present study was with instrumentation. Neither of the instruments in the present study assessed the influence social desirability had on participants' responses. Heppner et al. (2016) defined social desirability as individuals responding in ways that makes them appear socially desirable. In order to account for this phenomenon in research, it was recommended that a measure of social desirability be incorporated. A recommendation for future researchers would be to incorporate an

instrument that assesses participants' social desirability such as the Social Desirability Scale- 17 (Stöber, 2001). Another limitation with one of the instruments in the present study was the use of the Academic Entitlement Scale (AES) to measure academic entitlement. While providing support for the psychometric properties of the AES, Chowning and Campbell (2009) normed the instrument on undergraduate students. Although participants in the present study were students, there were graduate students. Upon an extensive review of literature, no measure of academic entitlement has been normed only on graduate students. Future research should seek to develop a measure of academic entitlement specifically for the assessment of graduate level students.

The seventh limitation of the present study was the statistical analysis and research design utilized, a non-experimental correlational research design. Correlational research designs provide evidence for relationships between variables. Salkind and Frey (2020) discussed how correlational research designs, and regression analyses specifically, explore how the relationship between variables predict future outcomes. Even though future outcomes are predicted, it does not provide evidence for causation. Another limitation to hierarchical regression analyses is making sure all covariates are controlled for in order limit confounding effects. Future research may consider controlling for memberships to professional counseling organizations. Membership to these groups may indicate a level of professional identity (Woo & Henfield, 2015). The present study did not request participants to share whether or not they were affiliated with a professional organization, and therefore could not control for this possible covariate. Future research may utilize a different research design to examine the relationship between academic entitlement, counselor professional identity, and counseling self-efficacy further.

Qualitative research, or a mixed-methods approach, may provide valuable insight from CTs' perspectives of how perceived academic entitlement and their professional identity have influenced their counseling self-efficacy. For example, the present study found that professional knowledge and attitude towards the counseling profession predicted counseling self-efficacy. Conducting qualitative research and conducting interviews with CTs would provide them with the opportunity to share whether or not they believe their knowledge and attitude contribute to self-efficacy. CTs could then expound upon their perspectives and share their reasoning for why, or why not, these constructs influence self-efficacy.

The final and eighth limitation of the present study was that the interaction between professional identity and academic entitlement was not examined. Although examining the relationship between these two constructs was not the purpose of the present study, a relationship between these constructs could influence counseling self-efficacy. Literature has identified that poor professional identity may influence entitlement and other unacceptable behaviors (Gholami & Faraji, 2021), It is recommended that future research explore if there is a relationship between professional identity and academic entitlement, and whether this relationship influences counseling self-efficacy.

### Summary of Discussion and Implications

The purpose of the present study was to investigate if CTs' degree of academic entitlement and/or degree of counselor professional identity predicted their degree of counseling self-efficacy. Professional knowledge and attitudes towards the counseling profession were found to be positive predictors of counseling self-efficacy among CTs,

when controlling for total counseling-related courses completed. More specifically, greater perceived professional knowledge and positive attitudes toward the counseling profession were related to higher levels of counseling self-efficacy.

Findings from the present study have an important contribution to counseling literature and implications for the counseling field. The findings provide additional support for the importance of developing a professional identity. When CTs are knowledgeable of the counseling profession, and possess a positive perspective regarding the profession, it is related to their perceived confidence in their ability to effectively counsel a client. CTs' professional knowledge can be strengthened throughout training programs by assisting them with gaining an understanding of the standards of the profession and their professional roles. By doing this, it may offset the doubts they possess regarding their counseling skills (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014; Woo & Henfield, 2015; Woo et al., 2017). Attitudes towards the counseling profession should be assessed through examining the pride, belief, and satisfaction CTs' experience in their role as a counselor (Woo & Henfield, 2015). The findings from the present study indicated that CTs who take pride in the counseling profession, believe in value of the profession, and are satisfied in their role have greater counseling self-efficacy. CTs are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities throughout their counselor education programs to develop their professional knowledge and to monitor their attitudes towards the profession. Counselor educators and supervisors should be intentional in assisting CTs with their professional identity development by infusing an evaluation of this development throughout CTs' training. Future research should continue to examine the academic entitlement of CTs since literature is lacking in the exploration of CTs'

academic entitlement. Additional research could further explore the positive correlation found in the present study between traits of academic entitlement and counseling self-efficacy. Since the present study found traits of professional identity being predictive of counseling self-efficacy, this relationship should be examined further to provide an explanation for what causes this relationship to exist. By doing this, in conjunction with findings from the present study, it could potentially assist with establishing a professional identity in counseling and further enhance the counseling self-efficacy of CTs.

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APPENDICES

INFORMED CONSENT

The University of Akron

Institutional Review Board

**Title of Study:** Academic Entitlement and Counselor Professional Identity as Predictors of Counselor Trainees' Self-Efficacy

**Principal Investigator:** Aaron C. Ray, M.A.Ed., LPC

**Faculty Advisor:** Robert Schwartz, Ph.D.

**Introduction:** You are being invited by Aaron C. Ray, M.A.Ed., LPC, a doctoral student in the Counselor Education and Supervision Program in the School of Counseling at the University of Akron, to participate in a research project. The present study will examine the relationship among master's-level counselor trainees' self-reported degree of academic entitlement, counselor professional identity, and counseling self-efficacy.

**Participants:** Participants must be currently enrolled in practicum or internship at a CACREP accredited master's-level counselor education program. Although the objective is to get as many participants as possible to participate in the present study, a minimum of 91 counselor trainees are needed.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the present study is to investigate if counselor trainees' degree of academic entitlement and/or degree of counselor professional identity predict their degree of counseling self-efficacy. This information may be useful for identifying contributions or hindrances to counselor trainees' level of counseling self-efficacy.

**Procedures:** If you decide to participate in the present study, you will complete an online survey that includes a demographic questionnaire and three research instruments. The first instrument you will complete will assess academic entitlement. In the second instrument, you will rate your degree of professional identity in counseling. In the third instrument, you will assess your current degree of counseling self-efficacy. The demographic questionnaire will be presented last to gain information regarding your demographics (e.g., age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, etc.). Your name will not need to

be provided and you will not be required to provide personal contact information (e.g., phone, email, etc.).

If you would like to be entered into a $50 Amazon gift card raffle, you will be given the option to provide your email at the end of the survey. The survey can only be completed one time and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Each of the questionnaires will be completed through the Qualtrics online survey software.

**Exclusion:** Those who are not currently enrolled in practicum or internship at a CACREP accredited master's-level counselor education program during data collection will be excluded from the present study.

**Risks and Discomforts:** There are no known risks associated with participating in the present study. Participants are going to be requested to provide demographic information and a self-report of their degree of academic entitlement, counselor professional identity, and counseling self-efficacy. This may be uncomfortable for some; therefore, there are minimal risks associated with the present study.

**Benefits:** Participants who complete the survey may not directly benefit from their participation in the present study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge base of the counseling profession. First, participating in the study will provide initial evidence for the contributions academic entitlement and/or counselor professional identity have on the degree of counselor trainees' counseling self-efficacy. Secondly, findings from this study may lead to additional investigations/research on the interaction of these constructs.

Participants who successfully complete this survey, and choose to provide their email address, will be entered into a raffle for a $50 Amazon gift card. If you would like to be entered into a raffle for this gift card, you will be given the option to provide your email at the end of this survey. Please know that your email will not be linked to your responses in this survey. If you are selected, the gift card will be sent electronically to the email address provided after the study is completed.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw:** Participation in the present study is voluntary. At any time, you have the right to withdraw from the study without penalty.

**Anonymous and Confidential Data Collection:** No identifying information will be collected. Participants are not required to sign and return the informed consent form to further protect their identity. Only the principal investigator and faculty advisor will be able to access survey responses through a secure password.

**Who to Contact with Questions:** If you have any questions about the present study, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Aaron C. Ray, M.A.Ed., LPC, at acr110@uakron.edu, or the Faculty Advisor, Robert Schwartz, Ph.D., at rcs@uakron.edu. This research is approved by the University of Akron Institutional Review Board. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, contact the IRB at irb@uakron.edu or 330-972-7666.

**Acceptance:**  I have reviewed the provided information and have no further questions regarding the present study. I voluntarily agree to participate in the present study. Clicking the forward button at the bottom of this page and beginning this survey will serve as my consent. You are welcome to print a copy of this consent statement for your personal records.

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

<u>Instructions</u>: Please complete the demographic questionnaire by answering each item with a response that resembles you.

1. Are you currently enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counseling master's program?

    a. Yes

    b. No

2. Are you currently enrolled in counseling practicum or internship?

    a. Yes

    a. No

3. Please indicate the type of counseling program(s) you are currently enrolled in.

    a. Clinical mental health counseling

    b. School counseling

    c. Marriage and family counseling

    d. Other (please specify) _____

4. What is your age? _____

5. What gender do you identify with?

   a. Woman

   b. Man

   c. Transgender woman

   d. Transgender man

   e. Non-binary

   f. Other (please specify) _____

6. What is your race/ethnicity?

   a. African/African American

   b. American Indian/Native American

   c. Asian/Asian American

   d. Caucasian/European American

   e. Hispanic/Latin American

   f. Middle Eastern/Arabic American

   g. Multiracial/Multiethnic

   h. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

   i. Other (please specify) _____

7. Please indicate the total number of counseling-related courses you have already completed: _____

8. Please indicate the total number of counseling-related conferences and workshops you have attended: _____

APPENDIX C

ACADEMIC ENTITLEMENT SCALE

Instructions: Think about your experience throughout your counseling program as you were completing coursework. Below are multiple statements about you that you may agree or disagree with. Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement using the response scale that has been provided.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |

1. _____ It is unnecessary for me to participate in class when the professor is paid for teaching, not for asking questions.

2. _____ If I miss class, it is my responsibility to get the notes.

3. _____ I am not motivated to put a lot of effort into group work, because another group member will end up doing it.

4. _____ My professors are obligated to help me prepare for exams.

5. _____ Professors must be entertaining to be good.

6. _____ I believe that the university does not provide me with the resources I need to succeed in college.

7. _____ Most professors do not really know what they are talking about.

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8.   _____ My professors should reconsider my grade if I am close to the grade I want.

9.   _____ I should never receive a zero on an assignment that I turned in.

10.  _____ If I do poorly in a course and I could not make my professor's office hours, the fault lies with my professor.

11.  _____ I believe that it is my responsibility to seek out the resources to succeed in college.

12.  _____ For group assignments, it is acceptable to take a back seat and let others do most of the work if I am busy.

13.  _____ For group work, I should receive the same grade as the other group members regardless of my level of effort.

14.  _____ My professors should curve my grade if I am close to the next letter grade.

15.  _____ Professors are just employees who get money for teaching.

APPENDIX D

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY SCALE IN COUNSELING – SHORT FORM

Instructions: Think about your own professional identity in the counseling profession.
Below are multiple statements about you that you may agree or disagree with. Indicate
your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the items by placing the appropriate
number on the line preceding each statement. Please use the response scale that has been
provided to rate the statements.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all in agreement | | | | | Totally in agreement |

1. _____ I am knowledgeable of the important events and milestones (e.g.,
    establishing ACA, state-level licensure) in counseling history.

2. _____ I am familiar with accreditation organizations (e.g., CACREP: Council for
    Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs) and their
    standards for professional preparation.

3. _____ I am familiar with certification organizations (e.g., NBCC: National Board
    for Certified Counselors) and their requirements for credentials

4. _____ I am familiar with professional counseling associations (e.g., ACA: American Counseling Association) and their roles and accomplishments in the profession.

5. _____ I am knowledgeable of professional counseling journals (e.g., JCD: The Journal of Counseling & Development, journal(s) relevant to my specialty area) and their contents' foci and purposes in the profession

6. _____ I am able to distinguish the counseling philosophy from the philosophy of other mental health professions (e. g., counseling psychology, social work, and psychiatry).

7. _____ I value the advancement and the future of my profession.

8. _____ I am satisfied with my work and professional roles.

9. _____ As a counseling professional, I share my positive feelings (e.g., satisfaction) when working with people in other fields.

10. _____ I actively engage in professional counseling associations by participating in conferences and workshops every year.

11. _____ I advocate for my profession by participating in activities associated with legislation, law, and policy on counseling on behalf of the profession.

12. _____ I keep in contact with counseling professionals through training and/or professional involvement in counseling associations.

13. _____ I keep involved in ongoing discussions with counseling professionals about identity and the vision of my profession.

APPENDIX E

COUNSELOR SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

<u>Instructions</u>: Think about your experience providing counseling services. Below are
multiple statements about you that you may agree or disagree with. Indicate your level of
agreement or disagreement with each of the items by placing the appropriate number on
the line preceding each statement. Please use the response scale that has been provided to
rate the statements.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agree Strongly | Agree Moderately | Neutral /Uncertain | Disagree Moderately | Disagree Strongly |

1.  _____ My knowledge of personality development is adequate for counseling
    effectively.

2.  _____ My knowledge of ethical issues related to counseling is adequate for me to
    perform professionally.

3.  _____ My knowledge of behavior change principles is not adequate.

4.  _____ I am not able to perform psychological assessment to professional standards.

5.  _____ I am able to recognize the major psychiatric conditions.

6.  _____ My knowledge regarding crisis intervention is not adequate.

7. _____ I am able to effectively develop therapeutic relationships with clients.

8. _____ I can effectively facilitate client self-exploration.

9. _____ I am not able to accurately identify client affect.

10. _____ I cannot discriminate between meaningful and irrelevant client data.

11. _____ I am not able to accurately identify my own emotional reactions to clients.

12. _____ I am not able to conceptualize client cases to form clinical hypotheses.

13. _____ I can effectively facilitate appropriate goal development with clients.

14. _____ I am not able to apply behavior change skills effectively.

15. _____ I am able to keep my personal issues from negatively affecting my counseling.

16. _____ I am familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of group counseling as a form of intervention.

17. _____ My knowledge of the principles of group dynamics is not adequate.

18. _____ I am able to recognize the facilitative and debilitative behaviors of group members.

19. _____ I am not familiar with the ethical and professional issues specific to group work.

20. _____ I can function effectively as a group leader/facilitator.

# APPENDIX F

# IRB APPROVAL

**Office of Research Administration**
Akron, OH 44325-2102

## NOTICE OF APPROVAL

Date:         2/24/2022

To:           Aaron C. Ray

From:         Kathryn Watkins        Director, Office of Research Administration and IRB Administrator

IRB Number:   20220202

Title:        Academic Entitlement and Counselor Professional Identity as Predictors of Counselor
              Trainees' Self-Efficacy

Approval Date:  2/23/2022

Thank you for submitting your Request for Exemption to the IRB for review. Your protocol represents minimal
risk to subjects and qualifies for exemption from the federal regulations under the category below:

☐ **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 benign behavioral interventions in conjunction with the
collection of information from adult subjects through verbal or written responses (including data entry) or
audiovisual recordings, and subjects have prospectively agreed to the intervention.

☐ **Exemption 4** – Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records,
biospecimens specimens, 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.

☐ **Exemption 7** – Research involving the use of a broad consent for the storage or maintenance of identifiable
information and/or biospecimens for future research.

☐ **Exemption 8** – Research involving the use of a broad consent for the use of identifiable information and/or
biospecimens for future research.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. **Any changes made to the study design or
procedures require a change application be submitted to the IRB for acknowledgment and/or approval
before the changes may be implemented**. If the IRB determines the change(s) pose an increased risk to subjects,
and/or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, a new application must be
submitted.

Please retain this letter for your files. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years
from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit another
Exemption Request. 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.

☑ Approved consent form/s enclosed

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